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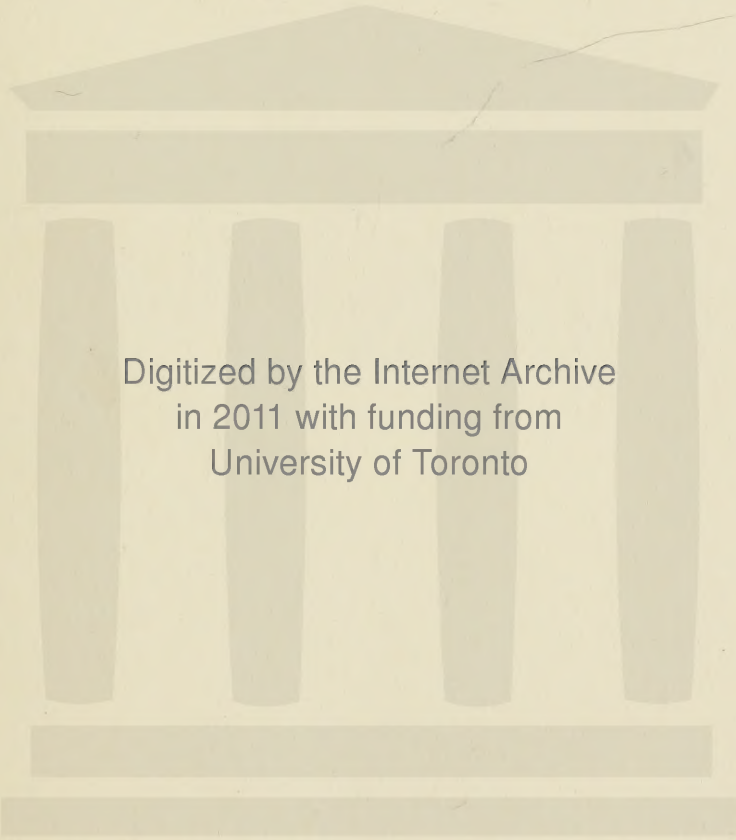
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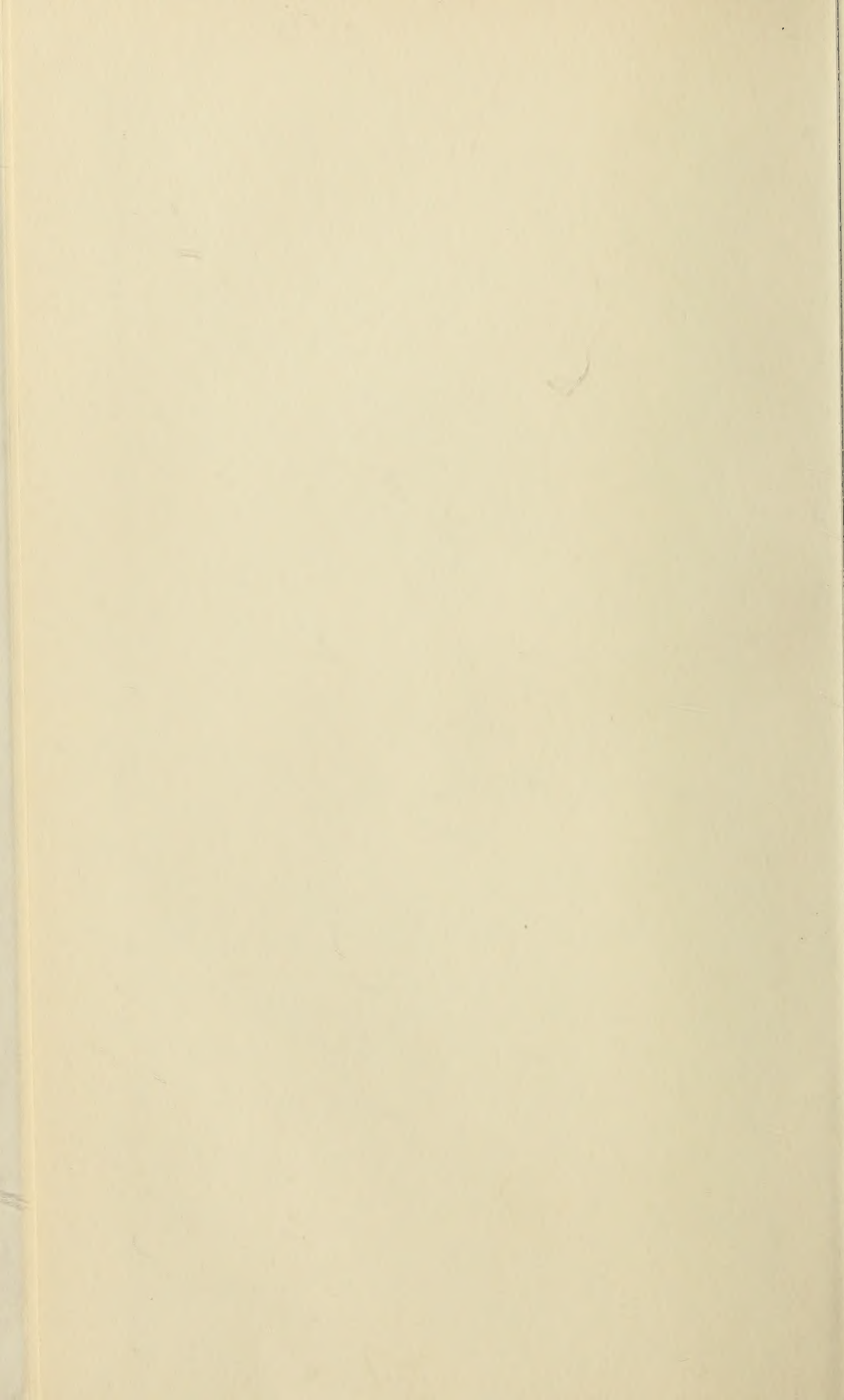


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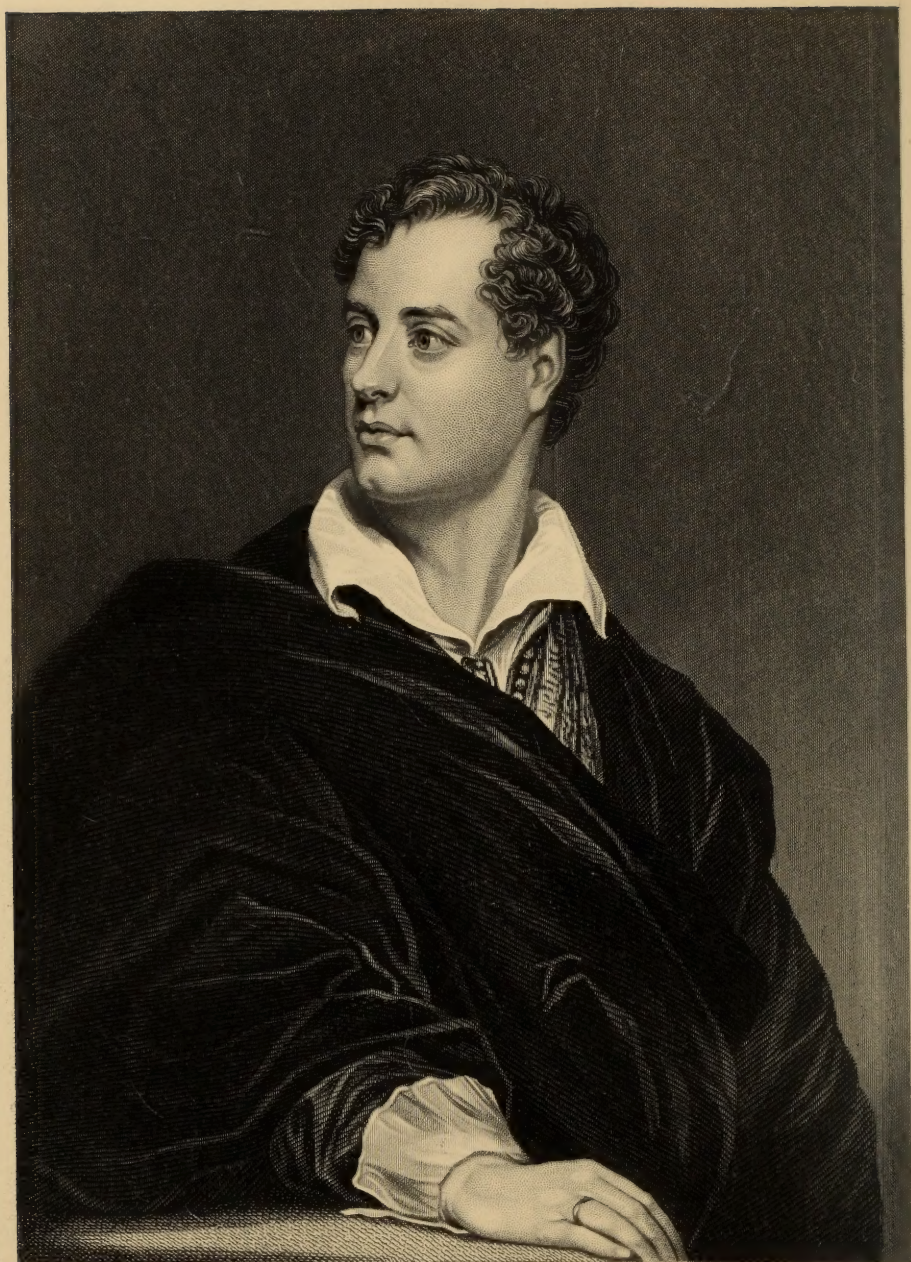
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THE REAL LORD BYRON.

THE REAL LORD BYRON.







T. Phillips, R.A.

W.E. Gibbs

My last words  
do not deem this promise  
cancelled for it was not a vow  
yours truly - J. Maynor -



# THE REAL LORD BYRON

THE STORY OF THE POET'S LIFE.

BY

JOHN CORDY JEAFFRESON,

AUTHOR OF

'A BOOK ABOUT THE CLERGY,' 'A BOOK ABOUT DOCTORS,'

'A BOOK ABOUT LAWYERS,'

ETC., ETC.

*Standard Edition.*



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# PREFACE

## TO THE STANDARD EDITION.

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TWELVE years and more had passed since Mrs. Beecher Stowe published her vile story to Byron's infamy, when in the MSS. of Mr. Alfred Morrison, the eminent connoisseur and literary collector, I came upon a collection of Byronic evidences that, giving new views of the poet's life, demonstrated the falseness of the abominable accusation. Having received Mr. Morrison's permission to use the writings for the removal of a dark stigma from the poet's fame, I felt that the documents should be given to the public as quickly as possible. For this end (after coming on another lot of Byronic evidences at the British Museum) I spoke to the editor of 'THE ATHENÆUM,' who on July 8, 1882, opened his columns of Literary Gossip with this paragraph, drawn by my hand :—

'In the course of the next few weeks we hope to print a series of hitherto unpublished Byron papers. Beginning with a letter from John Byron to his daughter Augusta, and letters from the poet's mother to her husband ; to Mrs. Leigh, the wife of General Charles Leigh, Colonel of the 20th Regiment of Infantry ; to her step-daughter Augusta,—the writings comprise : (1) a collection of poems by Lady Byron, written during her brief residence with her husband, some of them containing emendations by his pen ; (2) correspondence between Lady Byron and Augusta (the Hon. Mrs. Leigh) during the time of Lady Byron's engagement to the poet and the earlier months of their married life ; (3) correspondence from the date of Lady Byron's withdrawal from London till the settlement of the terms



of her separation from her husband ; (4) letters from Lord Byron to his wife, Mr. Drury, Mr. Hoppner, and others, including his last letter to Lady Byron, written on the eve of his departure from England ; (5) correspondence of Lady Byron and Augusta from the commencement of the quarrel between Lady Byron and her husband till the date of Lord Byron's death ; (6) documents touching the destruction of the 'Memoirs,' including Augusta's narrative of the circumstances of the destruction of the famous MSS. ; (7) correspondence from the date of the poet's death till 1830, exhibiting the circumstances, hitherto undivulged, that caused Lady Byron's animosity against the woman whom she had held for fifteen years in the highest esteem ; and (8) a group of letters having reference to Lady Byron's interview with her sister-in-law in 1851 in the presence of Mr. Robertson of Brighton. This large body of correspondence will be found to demonstrate the baselessness of the various statements made by Lady Byron in her later years to her sister-in-law's discredit, and more especially of the hideous imagination to which Mrs. Beecher Stowe gave such wide and lamentable publicity some thirteen years since.'

The appearance of this announcement in 'The Athenæum' of July 8, 1882, was followed quickly by incidents I had not anticipated. To my surprise I found that certain individuals who, from my view of the matter, would derive the largest benefit from the promised disclosures, and should therefore be especially delighted at the prospect of the perfect vindication of the poet's honour and his sister's womanly virtue, were most desirous that nothing should be done in the way indicated, to purge the honour of the one and the fame of the other of darkest stains. By an eminent solicitor, who either had or conceived himself to have authority for his action, the Editor of 'The Athenæum' was informed that he might not publish any of the documents alluded to in the announcement. The exalted persons for whom this eminent solicitor acted being the legal representatives of the writers of some of the most important letters referred to in the announcement, it was obvious that, even though they should not have the legal power to prohibit publication of the writings, they were in a position to get an *interim*

injunction, and raise obstacles to the publication of the evidence of Byron's innocence, that could only be removed by tedious and costly litigation. In consequence of this opposition, the Editor of 'The Athenæum,' with equal thought for the safety of his journal and the interests of men of letters, opened his columns of Literary Gossip on September 2, 1882, with this paragraph, for the information of the very many persons who had for weeks been growing more and more impatient for the promised documents:—

'Some weeks ago we stated our intention of printing a considerable mass of correspondence throwing light on the life of Lord Byron. Since this announcement was made we have received an intimation that the publication of these letters would be distasteful to several members of the Leigh and Byron families. This is somewhat surprising, for, as we mentioned, the effect of publishing the correspondence—and a further examination confirms the opinion we expressed—would be to prove the groundlessness of the horrible suggestions made public in 1869, and we should have supposed that the representatives of the Leigh family would have desired to see Mrs. Leigh's memory cleared of the aspersions of Mrs. Beecher Stowe. There is nothing in the documents that does not redound to the credit of Lord Byron and his sister. Still, as we wish as far as may be to defer to the wishes of their relatives, we shall not for the present take further steps in the matter.'

It will be observed that the Editor of 'The Athenæum,' in his care for the interests of literature, and more especially for the interests of history, avoided the use of words that could be tortured into an admission of the legal right of any persons to prevent the publication of historical evidences. Reserving the right, pertaining to himself and all other men of letters, to publish in the interest of history any documents,—even documents whose publication (were they unhistorical) would be an invasion of the proprietary rights of individuals,—he only declared his purpose not to exercise this right till a convenient season. Men of letters are indebted to the Editor of 'The Athenæum' for the

way in which he exercised this right effectively at a later point of this curious business.

For the moment 'The Athenæum' could not help me. The intimation, which thus affected the literary journal whose Editor had declared his wish to cleanse Byron's fame from defilement, and in so doing to wipe a stain from the nation's honour, was also a message to the man of letters in whose hands the evidences of Byron's innocence rested. That intimation was of course made not only to the Editor of 'The Athenæum,' but to all persons concerned with him in the affair. Naturally I regarded it as an announcement by powerful persons, that I should involve myself in costly litigation by any attempt to give the public the documents which I wished to publish. At this point of the story I sought the counsel of certain able Chancery lawyers, some of whom have been my friends from the time I ate dinners in Lincoln's Inn Hall. By them I was instructed in the law of letters, and shown what *I might* and what *I might not do* with the Byronic evidences.

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### THE LAW OF LETTERS.

The outgrowth of successive decrees of the Court of Chancery, dealing with letters as a particular kind of property, this Law of Letters declares that the receiver of an epistle addressed to him acquires only a qualified and limited property in the document, and that the writer retains to himself, and after his death to his legal representatives, the right of publishing the epistle and what may be termed the ownership of the form of composition, together with the ownership of the moral force that would accrue to the information or sentiments from the publication of the writer's name as an authority for the same information or sentiments. By writing and sending a letter to a correspondent, a person gives the addressee the materials of which the letter is composed, and the information contained in the letter. The information so given may be used at his discretion by the addressee, or by any person who gets view of the epistle, either with or without the addressee's permission. But whilst thus



parting with all property in the information of the epistle, the sender retains a property in the form of words or verbal composition of the letter, in so far that the law will at his request prevent the publication or stay the circulation of the words or of anything to the injury of his property in the same form of composition, provided he shall apply promptly for the protection of his property. For when a letter has been fully published, and has fairly passed into the hands of the public, without *any* opposition from the writer, it has passed from the owner's possession and become the property of all human kind. Delay in protesting against the publication would be regarded as consent to the publication on the part of the owner of the writing. For an instance let us take the case of the mass of Byronic evidences, which the Editor of 'The Athenæum' had the courage to publish last summer (to the surprise of the Editor of 'The Quarterly Review') whilst the controversy about 'The Real Lord Byron' was at its height. Had any one of the exalted persons who addressed the Editor of 'The Athenæum,' in the summer of 1882, gone into court, immediately on the publication of those documents, with a prayer for an injunction against 'The Athenæum,' he would have had a respectful hearing. What the result of the application would have been is open to question. Anyhow he would have been heard. But if he were to go into court with such petition now he would only provoke laughter. For him to make his prayer now, after the documents have been published in a score different languages, and dispersed over the whole world for so long a period, would be to bring him nothing but a courteous assurance that the property he sought to keep to himself had gone clean from him to all human kind,—beyond the power even of the High Court of Judicature to give him any help. He would be told he should have come sooner for the consideration of his questionable title, and would be dismissed with a smile.

The decrees, out of which this Law of Letters has grown, have all been made either during the lives or soon after the deaths of the writers of the epistles, and made on the ground that the verbal form of a writing is the writer's property, and resembles all other kinds of property in belonging to him till he parts with it by his own act. Thus made the decrees reveal no



disposition on the part of the law to regard property in letters as less enduring than property in land, precious gems, pictures, or any other kind of possessions. No case has yet arisen to constrain a judge to ponder whether this property in a form of words should be not regarded as less permanent than other kinds of property. No case has come under judicial cognizance in which the proprietorial right of a single individual and the manifest interests of history (*i. e.* the natural rights of many millions of individuals) have been in conflict. Hence, so far as the decrees go, it would appear that the legal representative of a person, who has been dead a hundred years, has as good property in the letters as in any other of the dead man's former undistributed possessions. It cannot, however, be questioned that had a suitor applied to Lord Eldon for an injunction to restrain the publication of letters (written by some Elizabethan worthy, of whom the applicant was the legal representative), the famous Chancellor would have doubted whether after so long a lapse of time the law should have a nice and serious regard for a kind of property, for which he used to hint his disesteem, even when delivering judgment for its preservation. In such a case the length of the time since the epistles were written would certainly have disposed the judge to disappoint the suitor. Had it been shown in the same cause that the injunction was sought in order to defeat the interests of history, it can scarcely be doubted the applicant would not have gained his end. In such a case, even Lord Eldon would have broken away from precedents, and, making new law, would have declined to withhold from the public what the public ought to possess, as no previous decree of his court constrained him to withhold it. In these times when so many documents, which the legal representatives of their writers would fain suppress, are being published *for* and *to* the advantage of the public, any day may produce an application for an injunction, which no judge could grant without doing society a serious injury, or decline without declaring property in letters less enduring than property in other possessions. In dealing with any such application it will be well for judges to declare property in unpublished writings no more enduring than property in published writings, and to ground the declaration on the reasonable assumption that the legislature intended by copyright

law to secure to authors, publishing their compositions for the public advantage, the same measure of property in their writings *after* publication that they had in them *before* publication.

By my instructors in this Law of Letters (friends to whom I shall ever hold myself deeply indebted for sympathetic encouragement and careful guidance when I sorely needed both) I was taught what I *might not do* and what I *might do* with the letters, which the law forbade me to publish without the permission of the persons who had property in the *mere verbal form* of the compositions. They taught me I might do nothing to the infringement of this property in mere verbal form; I might not publish one of the letters, or any part of a letter; I might not publish a *précis* of a letter; I might not publish that the writer of a letter said any certain thing contained in a letter; I might not in any way give the writer of any one of the letters as my authority for a statement made in my work on the strength of information coming to me from the letter; I might not weave into my text, either with inverted commas or without them, or in any way whatever, a single line of the language of a letter; I might not even assure the readers of my book that my information came to me from the unpublished letters. On the other hand, I was instructed that, as my knowledge was as indisputably my own property as any document was the property of its writer, I might give my knowledge to the world on my own sole authority, provided I did none of the above-mentioned things to the infringement of property in the verbal form of the documents from which I gained my knowledge. I was assured that I had an indisputable right to get knowledge from any source; that having gained it I was free to use it in any way I pleased that would not disturb other persons in the enjoyment of their property; that no judge could require me to declare the sources of my knowledge so long as I published it on my own authority; that no court would take a single step to follow my information to its source; that to any prayer for action to that end every judge would say, 'People are at liberty to believe or disbelieve what Mr. Jeaffreson says on his own authority; on the other hand, he is at liberty to say on his own authority what he knows or conceives that he knows.'

In accordance with these instructions by able lawyers I wrote

‘The Real Lord Byron,’ keeping throughout my labours well and cautiously within the line that divided my property in my own knowledge from the property in verbal form pertaining to the exalted persons who wished the Byronic evidences to be withheld from the public. Thanks to my guides and guardians I did my work no less safely than effectually. I state thus precisely how I worked with safety, in order that my brethren-in-letters may see what they *may not do* and what they *may do* lawfully with unpublished documents which intolerable law forbids them to publish for the public advantage.

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### DIFFICULTIES AND DANGERS.

The labour of writing my book was a troublous, anxious, sometimes an exasperating labour. I possessed in the documents I might not publish, for the demonstration of Byron’s innocence of the hideous charge made against him by Mrs. Beecher Stowe, and for the illustration of his story in other particulars—

(a) The evidences that enabled me to tell the whole story—the story the world had been so long yearning to hear—of the whole course of Byron’s married life; its opening months of happiness; its later months of bickerings; its concluding weeks of fierce resentments and contentions; with all the circumstances resulting in the bitter severance.

(b) The proofs that, instead of leaving her husband with the resolve never to see him again, Lady Byron went to Kirkby Mallory, hoping he would soon visit her and stay with her there, till she should again have hope of giving birth to an heir to the Byron barony; and that, instead of parting with Byron’s sister in disgust and loathing, she parted with her in love, and in confidence she would do her utmost to send her brother to Kirkby Mallory for the already-mentioned purpose.

(c) The evidences that Moore’s account of Byron’s regard for and intercourse with Teresa Guiccioli was an utterly erroneous



account, and known by Moore to be an absolutely false story when he put it on the lying record.

(d) The conclusive proof that 'the Memoirs' were destroyed at Byron's wish, and that the actual destroyer of them was John Cam Hobhouse (Lord Broughton); facts never imagined by any one of the hundreds of thousands of people who had yearned for the true account of the destruction of the autobiographical MSS.

(e) The demonstrations of the several causes of Lady Byron's severance from and eventual hatred of her husband's sister, after his death.

(f) The documents relating to Lady Byron's misconceptions respecting and last interview (at Reigate) with the Honourable Mrs. Leigh.

All these documents lay on my table before me day after day, to be referred to as I had need of any one of them for the execution of my enterprise; lying before the writer, who dared not publish any one of them, who knew that by an incautious use of any one of them he might blunder himself into disastrous litigation. Here were burning secrets for a man to hold, whilst he was under an irresistible impulse to tell them to the world, and at the same time knew that in telling them to the world he must exercise in every line of successive paragraphs the nicest care and discretion, to avoid overwhelming catastrophe!

One of the few close and familiar friends, who were in my confidence throughout this nice and perilous business, used with cynical drollery to declare he could not understand my feeling that I was bound to tell the world what I had discovered. This pleasant cynic and lively humourist declared it vastly agreeable to have a choice secret, to hug the knowledge other people wished to obtain, to chuckle over withheld information for which the world was thirsting. He advised me again and again to let the world go on misjudging Byron, and like a sensible man to mind matters of profitable business, which I was neglecting from a preposterous notion that I was bound in honour to wipe the brand of infamy from the great poet's fame.

But how could I hold my peace? how hold such burning secrets in my breast? Had I so nursed them, I should every day of my life have felt I was a false man of letters, a false Englishman; an ingrate to the poet, to whom I owed no little of



my better nature and much of my life's happiness ; a traitor to the nation whose honour was stained by the defilement put on her poet's story ; a coward who dared not be truthful because he was likely to incur misfortune, certain to provoke enmities by telling the truth ; a knave to be numbered with

‘ the reptile crew,  
The Janus glance of whose significant eye,  
Learning to lie with silence, would seem true,  
And without utterance, save the shrug or sigh,  
Deal round to happy fools its speechless obloquy.’

There was no course for me but to go on, and tell the astonishing truth as fully and convincingly as I could.

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### THE EVE OF PUBLICATION.

The anxiety and apprehensions attending my enterprise grew keener and more fruitful of sleepless nights as the hour approached for the publication of my book. Knowing how desirous certain powerful persons were to prevent a reopening of Byronic questions, I was reasonably apprehensive that, on the appearance of ‘The Real Lord Byron,’ they would trouble me with vexatious litigation to check the sale of a work they could not in the long run permanently stop. I had of course been informed by my legal friends that all my care in writing the work to keep well within the limits of my legal right could not prevent these powerful persons from taking measures that, had they taken them, would have precluded my volumes from floating readily into circulation. Had it been their pleasure to do so, they could of course have applied for an injunction, in which case they would of course have obtained an *interim injunction*, which would have stopped the sale of the book till their application for an injunction had been refused. It would then have been in their power to appeal from the court of first instance to a higher tribunal, and, on a second denial of their prayer, to appeal yet again to a still higher tribunal ; during all which litigation the sale of the book would have been stayed. Possibly none of the powerful persons meant to fight me, ever thought of fighting me, in this way.

By one of them I have been assured that, though greatly desirous of preventing a renewal of discussion of Byronic questions, he never meant (even in the case of 'The Athenæum's' announcement of a purpose to publish the Byronic documents themselves) to do more than protest strongly against a proceeding that would be extremely disagreeable to certain members of the Byron and Leigh families. Possibly the other powerful persons never meant to do more. But naturally I assigned the fullest meaning and purpose to the words which determined the Editor of 'The Athenæum' to defer action for the publication of the documents. Knowing that an eminent solicitor had protested against the publication of the evidences in 'The Athenæum,' knowing that an eminent solicitor had visited the British Museum in order to examine certain Byronic documents lying there, knowing my book was a book whose suppression would be desired by persons confiding in the eminent solicitor, I had good reason to apprehend that I should be in the troublous waters of litigation soon after the appearance of my book. Thus apprehensive, I of course determined to give the lawyers the shortest possible notice of the appearance of my book, and to give them no facilities for getting at the facts, which might possibly enable them to get up a decent show of grounds for an application for injunction. My book was, therefore, flashed out almost without a preliminary announcement. For the same reason it was published without an index.

There were other reasons why my anxiety and apprehensions grew keener and more fruitful of sleepless nights as the time of publication drew nigh. I knew that the publication of 'The Real Lord Byron' would bring me face to face with a host of strong and resentful enemies.

I knew Mrs. Beecher Stowe's many friends would not love me for demonstrating the absolute falseness of the nauseous story she put on our breakfast-tables, to the horror of English womankind.

I knew Tom Moore's many admirers would not love me for demonstrating that his standard book on Byron was a false book.

I knew the many persons who are animated with a fanatical hatred of Byron would be wrathful with me for wiping out to its very last speck the blackest blot on his fame.

I knew the fanatical idolaters of Byron would dislike the book, that aimed at rendering him homage, free from extravagance.

I knew the passionate vituperators of Lady Byron would be offended by my demonstration that her grievous failings were associated with divers good qualities, and that her worst offences were attended with extenuating circumstances.

I knew Lady Byron's passionate worshipers would not readily forgive me for convincing them that she was something very much 'lower than the angels.'

I knew the romantic admirers of Teresa Guiccioli would be indignant against me for telling the truth of her character and career.

I knew certain of the Shelleyan enthusiasts (*not* the discreet and scholarly enthusiasts of Mr. William Rossetti's 'school,' but the wild and frantic 'Shelleyan enthusiasts') would rise in rage against me for proving that the meeting of Byron and the Shelleys in Switzerland was the result of pre-arrangement in England.

I knew divers powerful persons, to whom the late Lord Broughton's fame was an affair of peculiar concern, would not like me for saying that he regarded Byron as a morbidly selfish creature, and that he (John Cam Hobhouse) was the actual destroyer of the poet's 'Memoirs'; statements that had scarcely been denied in the 'Quarterly,' when they were proved true, to every reader's satisfaction, by the publication in 'The Athenæum' of documents to be found in the Appendix to the present volume.

Knowing that my book would offend all these various people and sets of people, it is not wonderful that I grew more nervous as the moment for publication approached. How could I be otherwise than nervous, when I could not produce a single document in support of my staggering assertions? The reviewer of my book in 'The Saturday Review' was justified in saying, 'Every statement which Mr. Jeaffreson makes may, of course, be absolutely supported by documentary evidence sufficient to convince the judges *in banco*. We have no intention whatever of suggesting it is not. But until the evidence is produced, the statements have no more value than those of a novel.' This language no doubt is slightly excessive, but a certain amount of overstatement is permissible to reviewers. Had they appeared in



the form of a novel, my statements would have been offered to the world as more or less imaginative. Appearing in the form of serious personal history, they were accompanied with the writer's word of honour that they were true statements; and no writer with a reputation to suffer from untruthfulness would pledge his honour for the truth of statements which, were they fictitious, could be easily shown and would be immediately proved to be mere fabrications. But the reviewer's remarks were substantially just and justifiable. The weakness of my book was the necessary consequence of the difficulties under which it was produced,—difficulties which precluded me from publishing the documents that justified my startling assertions in every particular. Soon after the appearance of his article the Saturday Reviewer had under his eyes the 'documentary evidence sufficient to convince the judges *in banco*.'

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### THE PUBLICATION.

Fortunately I had about me a few staunch and chivalrous friends, who knew what I was doing, knew the nature and qualities of my evidence, knew the difficulties under which I had been working, knew the peril I was running. To these loyal men of letters I owe the success of 'The Real Lord Byron.' Resolving to give me the moral support that was needful for my purpose, they gave it lavishly. In a masterly review, written by a man who knew precisely what he was doing in the service of an editor, who surpassed all previous editors of his powerful journal in concern for the interests of literature, 'The Times' declared for my book in no uncertain voice at the very moment of its appearance. 'The Athenæum' came out quickly with its declaration that 'no other book relating to the history of English literature in the nineteenth century had appeared of recent years that could claim to contain so much novel information as' the new book on Byron. Outsiders asked how 'The Athenæum' could be so certain that I had gained 'access to new sources of information.' Judicious people knew 'The Athenæum' was not

likely to speak out in this fashion on insufficient grounds. The readers of this Preface do not need to be reminded that the Editor of 'The Athenæum' was speaking of evidences known to him no less thoroughly than they were known to me. Other strong writers in other strong papers followed in the same strain. If it was a righteous and grand work to wipe from Byron's fame the stain that was a stain on England's fame, let not the honour of doing it be ascribed to me in a larger degree than to each of my generous coadjutors. It was a work I could not have done single-handed. It was a work done by a band of men of letters. A share of the honour is mine, and I shall ever regard that share as one of my brightest literary distinctions. But my share of it is no larger than the share pertaining to each of my comrades,—the men who gave me their moral support when I needed it. The book had not been out a month before it was seen in every book-shop of 'the town,' clamoured for at all the great libraries, talked about in every drawing-room and at every dinner-table. Letters came to my house by every post, showing how keenly people were interested in the work in every part of the United Kingdom, in Germany and France, and in the United States. It had been out two months when a friend, standing near me in a corner of a crowded London drawing-room, said to me, 'The remarkable feature of the book's success is the unanimity of sentiment about it; there is no note of dissent from the universal praise; there is "no opposition."' My answer was, 'The tempest of praise will soon be over, and then the enemy's guns will make themselves heard. Wait another month, and you will have the pleasure of seeing me assailed. The opposition is only "holding back" till the applause shall have subsided.' I knew more than my friend of the arrangements of the opposition,—more of them than the leaders of the opposition suspected.

## THE OPPOSITION.

The opposition opened fire upon me from 'The Quarterly Review' and 'The Nineteenth Century Review' in articles that appeared almost on the same day. These articles would have been followed by shots from other quarters, had they not been answered in ways unanticipated by the Editors of those Reviews. When the proprietor and the editor of 'The Quarterly' published their manifesto against 'The Real Lord Byron,' they little imagined that it would be answered immediately by the publication of documents which would demonstrate the accuracy of every important statement in the book, and the absolute erroneousness of every important statement of their article. On the contrary, imagining there could be no publication of documents to put the author of 'The Real Lord Byron' in the right, they conceived that bold assertion was all that was needed to make it appear he was altogether in the wrong. I of course assume that they believed in the accuracy of the bold assertions of their article. By the words of the penultimate sentence I only mean that, in their abundant knowledge of the difficulties under which my book was written, they assumed I must necessarily accept in silence the punishment they designed to administer. They were answered in a way that surprised them greatly. Fortunately for me, fortunately for literature, 'The Athenæum' saved me from the trouble of replying conclusively to *all* the charges of their manifesto. Taking upon itself the responsibility of the bold action, 'The Athenæum' published *en bloc* the most important of the Byronic evidences which it had hoped and promised to publish twelve months earlier. The evidences thus published are not the whole of the Byronic evidences lying in Mr. Alfred Morrison's folios or in the cases of the British Museum, but they were those of them that demonstrate the accuracy of my narrative of Byron's 'Life' in all its chief points. Together with these evidences appeared in the same number of 'The Athenæum' (embodied in a letter from my pen) the Honourable Mrs. Leigh's autograph account of the 'Destruction of the Memoirs.' A fortnight earlier there had appeared in 'The Athenæum' (embodied in a letter from my



pen) the epistle from John Cam Hobhouse to the Honourable Mrs. Leigh, in which reference is made by the writer to the 'Memoirs' as '*foolish documents*,' and to 'that *morbid selfishness* which was the great stain on' Byron's 'character.' Consequently, in Nos. 2910 and 2912 of 'The Athenæum' (4th August and 18th August, 1883) readers had under their eyes the documentary evidence of the truth of the matters contained in 'The Real Lord Byron,' and the evidence that 'The Quarterly' was absolutely, wildly, ludicrously wrong in its denials of the truth of those matters.

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### THE BYRONIC EVIDENCES AT THE BRITISH MUSEUM.

A few words must be said of those Byronic evidences, lying at the British Museum, of which 'The Quarterly' remarks, 'Although there are no sealed-up Byron papers, there is in the British Museum *an open collection* of Byron correspondence, including letters from Captain and Mrs. Byron, Lord and Lady Byron, Mrs. Leigh, Lord Broughton, Dr. Lushington, Mr. Wilmot Horton, the Rev. Frederic Robertson, &c., &c. Mr. Jeaffreson has largely used without naming or specifying them; and owing to the writer's omission of references, he has been unduly credited (so far as this correspondence is concerned) with peculiar sources of information not accessible to others.' This single sentence contains no less than *three* misstatements and one false suggestion. (1) It is stated that this collection of MSS. was an 'open collection'; whereas it was a 'close one,' to which the readers of the British Museum Library had been for years denied access. (2) It is stated that these papers were 'accessible to others' (*i. e.* to the public); whereas when I insisted on my right to see them, persons asking to see them at the British Museum had for years been denied access to them. (3) It is stated that I 'had been unduly credited (so far as this correspondence is concerned) with peculiar sources of information;' whereas in crediting me in respect to these closely-kept papers



with a peculiar source of information, the public gave me no more than due credit. (4) It is falsely suggested that I refrained from naming and specifying the papers in order that I might impose on public credulity. I refrained from naming and specifying the papers (which a few days before I examined them had been carefully examined by an eminent London solicitor—the solicitor of certain exalted persons), because I was told by my legal advisers that, though I had an unquestionable legal right to use the papers in the manner in which I subsequently used them under their careful guidance, I should expose myself to vexatious legal proceedings by either specifying the several documents or naming them generally.

Something more must be said of these same Byronic evidences lying at the British Museum. Mr. Alfred Morrison's large collection of Byronic papers is based on a mass of documents formerly belonging to Byron's sister, the Honourable Mrs. (Augusta) Leigh,—documents that may be described as about two-thirds of the Byronic writings which she preserved till her death; some of them being pleasant memorials to her of former times; whilst others were treasured by her as serious and precious evidences for the vindication of her own character and her brother's character, and for the clear illustration of her intercourse and dealings with Lady Byron. Mr. Morrison (by his literary agent) bought his two-thirds of these documents under the impression that he was buying, if not the whole collection, at least all of the collection lying in the vendor's hands. In a short time, however, the vendor reappeared with the remaining third of the collection, and offered them to Mr. Morrison's agent for a preposterous price. Though it comprised a few interesting and one or two important writings, this remnant of the collection may be termed the refuse and litter of the collection. It consisted largely of copies of the documents already sold to the eminent connoisseur and literary collector. These remaining documents being found on examination so comparatively worthless, and the price set upon them being so exorbitant, Mr. Morrison declined to buy the documents. They were subsequently bought by the Trustees of the British Museum. I do not know what the Trustees gave for them; but I should be surprised to learn they gave much more than a twentieth part

of the sum the vendor asked for them from Mr. Morrison's agent.

Soon after the writings came into the hands of the Trustees, Mr. Thompson, the eminent palæographer and keeper of the Museum MSS., published one of them in 'The Academy,' feeling precisely as I felt on first seeing Mr. Morrison's Byronic documents, that evidence so effective for vindicating the poet's honour and his country's honour, should be made known to the nation without delay. The first consequence of Mr. Thompson's commendable action was that the Editor of 'The Academy' received an intimation that should he venture to publish another of the documents, whose publication was requisite for the vindication of Byron's honour and the nation's honour, legal measures would be taken immediately to restrain him from his inconvenient and objectionable activity. A second consequence of Mr. Thompson's laudable action was that pressure was put upon the Trustees of the British Museum to withhold from the public all view of the documents bought with public money for the public information, the pressure being made on the ground that to exhibit the documents to the public would be an unlawful act of publication. Having regard to consequences, that might result in the limitation of their purchasing powers, and thereby prove highly injurious to public interests, and especially to the interests of literature, the Trustees of the British Museum yielded to this powerful pressure; and in my humble opinion the Trustees did quite right in thus yielding to the pressure, out of pure concern for the welfare of the great institution committed to their care, and the consequent advantage of all persons using its library. The Trustees, be it observed, did not make an 'official order' that the documents should never under any circumstances be exhibited, but merely gave a verbal direction that they should not be given out to persons asking for them,—a direction which, whilst putting the documents under prohibitory seal to ordinary applicants, left the Principal Librarian at liberty to put them in the hands of any especial person who needed a view of them for the execution of an important enterprise.

This direction operated as an effectual barrier to mere idlers and gossip-mongers. The description of the MSS. was never

removed from the MSS. catalogue ; but persons were steadily told on giving in tickets of application for them that the writings were not given out to the public. When in the summer of 1882 I gave in a ticket of application for the documents, a gentle smile came over the face of the most civil and gentlemanlike attendant who received my ticket. 'It's no use, sir,' he observed, 'my taking this in. Those manuscripts are not given out.' To my request that all the same he would take it to the receiver of tickets, he replied, 'Surely, sir, I will take it in, but it will be returned with the usual answer.' In due course he returned with the usual answer. A few minutes later I was closeted with a gentleman, who was acting as Keeper of the MSS. during Mr. Thompson's absence from town for his summer holiday ; and I was informed by him that I could not see the papers as a Trustees' Order precluded him from giving them out. That a gentleman, so highly placed in the Museum, imagined there was a regular Trustees' Order to that effect shows how the verbal direction of the Trustees operated like an Order in the establishment. Courtesy to the public is the rule of demeanour at the British Museum from the highest to the humblest of its officials. This gentleman could not take me at once to the Principal Librarian (it was already 4 p.m.), but he was at pains to arrange that I should see Mr. Bond at ten o'clock on the following morning. At that interview with Mr. Bond I was told by the Principal Librarian that I could not see the papers till the Order Book was searched. He was under the impression there was no Order touching the matter, but the Order Book must be searched before he could say whether he could let me see the papers. Had such an Order been found I should, of course, have gone to the Trustees, and, in case they refused me access to what I had a right to see, should have asked them in public places why they would not let me see what I had a right to see. But of course I gave Mr. Bond no hint of this intention, knowing he was a gentleman certain to do his duty, and in the performance of it to be perfectly indifferent to consequences, so long as he knew he did it. A few hours later I received from Mr. Bond a note of intelligence that, in the absence of any Order constraining him to write in other terms, he was glad to tell me I could see the papers. In all this business Mr. Bond, and every person at the Museum whom



I encountered in the prosecution of my purpose, acted as I could have wished,—acted as from long experience of the Museum I knew they would act, with punctilious regard to duty and the nicest courtesy. My reasons for stating these particulars so precisely is that my testimony should be of service to the officers of the Museum should it ever be suggested that, in letting me see the papers, they were less than duly mindful of the verbal direction that the documents should not be shown to ordinary inquirers. Short of doing what he could not have done rightly, Mr. Bond did all he could do to carry out the wish of the Trustees, and to act in accordance with the powerful pressure which had occasioned their verbal direction. On receiving permission to see the papers, I went to the British Museum day after day till I had made copies of every one of them. This is the story of the way in which I obtained access to what the 'Quarterly' called 'an *open* collection of Byron correspondence.' Possibly the collection is open now. On that point I have made no inquiry. But if it has been opened to the public since the publication of 'The Real Lord Byron,' it was I who broke the prohibitory seal and laid them open to the public.

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#### SOMETHING ABOUT MR. JAMES ANTHONY FROUDE.

I MUST say a few words on the Opposition's 'other gun,' the article on matters touching Shelley, contributed by Mr. James Anthony Froude to 'The Nineteenth Century,' under the title of 'A Leaf from the Real Life of Lord Byron.'

Just as certain good and sound ships, built on wrong lines, are said by sailors to have been 'built to roll,' there are charming authors, who, from intellectual inexactness or some other cause, may be said to have been 'born to blunder.' Mr. Froude is one of those charming authors. Sometimes he blunders not so much from want of thought as from excess of it. Years since a great historian tried to whip him out of this bad habit into reliable behaviour. But it would be easier to cure a horse of shying than to cure Mr. Froude of blundering, by the lash. The critic's cutting thong never



did this delightful blunderer any good; it only made the culprit whine to the hard-hearted world for protection against that cruel reviewer, who did treat him so badly. Born to blunder, Mr. Froude must go on blundering to the end. Here are some of his blunders on *matters of fact* (only *some* of them) in the 'Leaf from the Real Life of Lord Byron.'

*Blunder No. 1.*—'Shelley, as every one knows,' says Mr. Froude, 'was married first to a Brompton school-girl,—Harriet Westbrooke.' Does every one know this? Most people know that Harriet Westbrook (Mr. Froude mis-spells her surname) was a Clapham school-girl, not a Brompton one. No doubt Lady Shelley puts the school at Brompton; but a critical writer about the Shelleys ought to know that of all the inaccurate and foolish books about Shelley, Lady Shelley's book is perhaps the most inaccurate.

*Blunder No. 2.*—'At the end of two years,' says Mr. Froude, 'they separated.' Did they? As Shelley married Harriet Westbrook by Scotch form in the first week of September 1811, remarried her in England on 24th March, 1814, and was certainly living with her in the following month, they can scarcely have separated from one another for ever at the end of the second year from their first marriage.

*Blunder No. 3.*—Speaking of Mary Godwin, Mr. Froude says, 'Though she had been bred up to regard love as the essential part of marriage, she was a perfectly pure, innocent woman;' meaning, of course, that she was educated from her childhood to hold certain of her parents' earlier and notorious views respecting marriage,—*i. e.* that mutual love was a sufficient sanction of conjugal union, and that where such love existed it was better for spouses to live together in Free Love than in the bondage of Lawful Wedlock. It is certain that during their brief association William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft modified these views of marriage, so far as to be lawfully married to one another; that soon after Mary Wollstonecraft's death, if not during her life, Godwin abandoned them altogether; and that his daughter by her was *not* educated to regard the matrimonial rite as an idle form.

*Blunder No. 4.*—'At the end of the same month they' (*i. e.* Shelley and Mary Godwin) 'ran away together,' says Mr.

Froude, 'to Switzerland, contented with a pledge to be true to each other while life lasted.' The evidence is overwhelming that Shelley (at this time of his career) held it to be immoral for a man to make such a promise to any woman; that in his opinion if a man made any such promise, it was not binding on him; that Mary Godwin knew him to hold these views; and that therefore, when they so promised one another in words, the mutual pledge did not signify to either of them what Mr. Froude implies.

*Blunder No. 5.*—Speaking of the Shelleys' sojourn with Byron in Switzerland, and of Chamouni, as though it were in Switzerland instead of Savoy, Mr. Froude says, 'During the four months which they and Byron spent at Chamounix,' &c. *Four months at Chamounix!* Why they never spent a single day or single hour with Byron at Chamouni. They went there for a week *without Byron*; the whole trip, including the journeys to and fro, barely covering eight days. The time they spent in Switzerland with Byron was spent at Geneva, and was considerably short of four months. Byron met the Shelleys at Geneva on 25 May, and the Shelleys left Geneva for England on 29 August, having spent eight of the intervening days in the trip to Chamouni, apart from Byron. Consequently the entire time the two parties spent together in Switzerland was barely fourteen weeks. Let the two smaller mistakes pass as examples of the minute inaccuracies with which the whole of Mr. Froude's article is peppered. I will not score them against the inexact writer. It is enough for the present count that this gentleman, who affects to know everything about Byron's intercourse with Shelley, Mary Godwin, and Jane Clermont in Switzerland, imagines the four friends were living at Chamouni, when in fact they were living at Geneva.

*Blunders No. 6, No. 7, No. 8.*—Speaking of Byron's manner of living in Venice in the spring of 1818, when Allegra was given into his hands at the Palazzo Mocenigo, Mr. Froude says, 'But it was the period of his wildest disorders; for he had extricated himself from the Venetian courtesans only to exchange them for another man's wife.' In these twenty-six words Mr. Froude makes no less than *three* bad errors of fact. (1) Byron had not extricated himself from the Venetian courtesans in the

spring of 1818; he did not get quit of them till the beginning of the next year. (2) Byron was not living in the spring of 1818 with the lady pointed to by the words 'another man's wife'; his first introduction to Teresa Guiccioli took place in April 1819. As he never exchanged words with the Countess till April 1819, he cannot have been living with her in the spring of 1818. (3) In saying that 'the period of' Byron's 'wildest disorders' was the period during which he lived with the Countess Guiccioli, Mr. Froude makes a statement known by the whole world to be contrary to fact. His domestic life, whilst he lived with Teresa Guiccioli, was so comparatively tame and orderly, that Shelley, regarding it with approval, commended him for steady growth in virtue. Three blunders of fact in twenty-six words by a gentleman who presumes to censure another writer for inaccuracy!

*Blunder No. 9.*—Speaking of the Shelley-Claire scandal, and my way of dealing with it, Mr. Froude says I 'ought not to have repeated a scandalous story, and accepted part of it as true.' I accept no part of it as true; on the contrary, whilst declaring the greater part untrue, I declare that possibly the remainder was false. Here are my words: 'The Consul-General's information (*which may have been false in every particular*) was imparted to Byron,' &c. How is one to deal with the blunderer who mistakes a statement that a story 'may have been false in every particular,' for a statement that the story was certainly true in some particulars?

*Blunder No. 10.*—Speaking of the several allegations of this scandalous story, Mr. Froude says, 'Forgotten they would have been, and need never have been revived out of oblivion, had not Mr. Jeaffreson desired to ornament his pages with sensational scandal, and to find a reason for the omission of Jane Clermont's name in Byron's will.' What are the facts? 'The Real Lord Byron' was published at the threshold of May 1883. The scandalous story was published in the review of 'Shelley and Mary' (the privately circulated 'Shelley Letters and Documents') that appeared in the 'Edinburgh Review' of October 1882. Thus published in October 1882, the scandalous story was the talk of every London dinner-table in October 1882. Carried over the Atlantic it ran like wildfire through the United



States ; the 'Edinburgh' article being reprinted in the New York 'Home Journal,' under the title of 'New Facts about Shelley,' in December 1882. The 'Edinburgh' article was a review of a book printed for private circulation *by* Sir Percy Florence Shelley and Lady Shelley. The 'Edinburgh' article appeared *with* the sanction of Sir Percy Florence Shelley and Lady Shelley, although the writer's excessive communicativeness is said to have annoyed them. The information contained in that article came to the pages of the 'Edinburgh Review' directly or indirectly *from* the Field Place muniments,—*from* the evidences in the hands of Sir Percy Florence Shelley and Lady Shelley. Yet Mr. Froude (*holding Sir Percy Florence Shelley's brief*, and writing from Sir Percy Florence Shelley's papers) says that had it not been for my book, which was published just at the close of April and the opening of May 1883, the world would never have heard of the scandalous story, which was published in the 'Edinburgh Review' of October 1882. Let my readers ponder these facts, and say whether the facts point to a not creditable business. Is it Mr. Froude's opinion, or is it not his opinion, that he has been used as a tool in a discreditable business? I do not and will not regard Mr. Froude as a principal in the business, or as anything more than a tool who was ignorant of the contents of the 'Edinburgh' article. But the person or persons who misinstructed Mr. Froude cannot be conceived to have been ignorant of the 'Edinburgh' article and its contents.

Here are *ten* bad blunders of fact. Though it occupies fifteen pages of 'The Nineteenth Century,' Mr. Froude's article contains only eight and a half pages of original matter; the remainder of the article being made of quotations and documents. Ten bad blunders of fact in eight and a half pages by a writer presuming to pass judgment on the accuracy of another writer! The article contains other blunders of fact, with which I will not weary the reader. On every point of conflict between his statements of fact and my statements of fact Mr. Froude is absolutely wrong. I have said nothing of the blunders of baseless presumption, false inference, wild unreason. They are numerous. For examples of them I refer the reader to the Notes and Appendix of this volume. Could I ask a favour of Mr. James Knowles, the editor and proprietor of 'The Nineteenth

Century,' I should ask him to let me edit this wonderful article as a curious example of the number of mistakes it is possible to cram into so few pages of writing.

Mr. Froude's transcripts of unpublished letters and of passages from my book are even richer in inaccuracies than the original writing of his 'Nineteenth Century' article. Stating wrongly that Claire wrote to Byron from Florence on 21st March, 1821, Mr. Froude forthwith gives his transcript of the letter to which he refers (the Egerton MSS. letter), giving it with its right date, 24th March, 1821. This is Mr. Froude's way of dealing with dates. The transcript, which is introduced in this characteristic fashion, occupies just ninety-four lines of the 'Nineteenth Century' type, and contains the absolutely amazing number of eighty-one inaccuracies. Most of these inaccuracies are mere matters of punctuation, orthography, paragraphical arrangement, and literal peculiarity ;—minute inaccuracies, that do not affect the writer's meaning, though great care should have been taken to avoid them in a transcript, given avowedly not for the sake of its information, but as an example of Claire's epistolary style. Some of the mistakes are, however, comical and inexcusable misreadings of Claire's words. Thus 'desire' is given by Mr. Froude for 'design', 'heart' for 'breast', and 'Bagrea-cava' for 'Bagna-Cavallo', the name of the place to which Allegra was sent for education in a convent. The worst of these eighty-one inaccuracies in a single letter is the omission of nine important words, affecting in a remarkable manner the force of an important passage. Urging that Allegra, instead of being sent to a convent, should be sent to an English boarding-school, Claire writes,—"I propose to place her at my own expence at one of the best english boarding-schools where if she is deprived of the happiness of a home and paternal cares, she at least would receive an english education which would enable her after many years of painful and unprotected childhood, to be benefitted by the kindness and affection of her parents' friends. *This school shall be chosen by your own friends*, I will see her only so often as they shall decide because I hope to induce you by this sacrifice of myself to yield the child to proper hands."

By carelessly omitting the nine important words, here printed in italics, Mr. Froude represents Claire as proposing to see

Allegra only as often as shall be decided by the friends of both of the child's parents, whereas she offers to leave matters touching her feelings so closely, as the choice of the school and the frequency of her interviews with her daughter, *altogether to Byron's friends*. Misrepresenting thus greatly Claire's magnanimous offer, the careless omission may be said to make her talk sheer nonsense, in what she says of her self-sacrifice. The gentleman, who deals in this way with manuscripts, should be somewhat less boastful of his painful and conscientious study of original evidences. At the foot of this letter from Claire, Byron wrote this note to Hoppner :

"Dr. Hoppner,—The moral part of this letter upon the Italians &c. comes with an excellent grace from the writer now living with a *man* and his *wife*, and having planted a child in the Fl Foundling &c. With regard to the rest of the letter you know as well as anyone how far it is or is not correct."

Mr. Froude can't transcribe this brief note without altering the punctuation by the insertion of four commas, omitting the 'Fl' before 'Foundling', substituting 'when' for 'now' before 'living', and writing 'far' instead of 'well' before 'as anyone'. In this slatternly, helter-skelter, happy-go-lucky fashion are manuscripts dealt with by the historian who seldom touches anything without blundering about it. This curiously inaccurate Mr. Froude cannot even copy printed passages of my book without exhibiting his characteristic inexactness in almost every sentence. In his transcripts from my book he inserts commas and full stops where I use none ; he leaves out marks of punctuation where I use them ; he intimates by 'points' that he omits words, where he doesn't omit any ; and elsewhere he omits, to my serious misrepresentation, twenty-six words from the middle of one of my sentences, without indicating the omission. A writer of my way of working may well laugh on finding himself called to order for inaccuracy by Mr. Froude. On hearing that Mr. Froude had condescended to reprove me for his own besetting infirmity, I could not think seriously how I ought to deal with him, till my laughter had spent itself. But enough of the amiable gentleman who makes ten bad blunders of fact in eight-and-a-half pages of original writing, and is guilty of eighty-one inaccuracies in the transcript of a single letter.



## SOMETHING ABOUT MR. JAMES KNOWLES.

Immediately after reading Mr. Froude's 'Leaf from the Real Life of Lord Byron,' I wrote to Mr. James Knowles, the editor and proprietor of 'The Nineteenth Century,' asking him for space in his Review in which to correct the writer's curious misconceptions and numerous inaccuracies. Mr. Knowles having promptly given me the answer I desired, I wrote an article in reply to my censor and sent it to the editor of 'The Nineteenth Century,' an article published a few weeks later in 'The Athenæum,' and now republished in the Appendix to the present volume. Acknowledging the receipt of this article, Mr. Knowles wrote to me on 11th August, 1883, 'I am sending on your MS. to Spottiswoode's to be put in type, and when I get it in proof will write to you finally about its insertion in the "Nineteenth Century," where in some form or other I think it has a claim to be.' In due course I received a proof of my article from Mr. Knowles, who, before the proof was returned to him, may, of course, be presumed to have discovered that poor Mr. Froude could not say a word in his own defence, or palliate in any way the absurdities of his rash essay on matters about which he knew nothing. Under these circumstances Mr. Knowles had two courses open to him. He could keep his word, and in keeping it inform his readers of the ludicrous badness of the essay he had sold them under Mr. Froude's name,—a course of action that would have tended to shake his readers' confidence in 'The Nineteenth Century.' Or he could discover that my article was too long for the insertion, to which he admitted it was entitled,—a course of action which even the editor of 'The Nineteenth Century' could not take with undiminished self-complacence. He took this latter course. I think he should have taken the former course.

It had been the intention of the malcontents to follow up 'The Quarterly' and 'Nineteenth Century' manifestoes with articles in magazines of inferior quality. But they were disheartened by the results of the firing of their great guns. By so promptly and courageously publishing the Byronic evidences, which had been so long withheld from the public, and publishing certain other letters that were not wholly ineffective, 'The Athenæum'

closed the controversy before it had fairly begun. There was amazement in Albemarle Street. Matters had taken a turn for which Dr. William Smith was not prepared. Mr. James Knowles was of opinion that the public had heard quite enough about Byron. Gentlemen who had been instructed to write down 'The Real Lord Byron' in certain small magazines, wrote to their editors that, after what had happened to 'The Quarterly' and 'Nineteenth Century,' they did not know what to do or how to do it. By return of post they were ordered to do nothing. The defeat of the malcontents was complete. The whole opposition had been lifted up, and thrown to the wind like dust.

So ends the story of the way in which the evidences of Byron's real character and career were hidden away from public view, and resolutely withheld from public view, till they were discovered and laid before the world, in spite of the difficulties and dangers of the work. The attempts to discredit my book failed completely. Had it been a weak book, far stronger influences than the old-fashioned 'Quarterly' and new-fashioned 'Nineteenth Century' would have failed to counteract the influence of the journals and magazines that had proclaimed the value of the work. I cannot hope that the life of the book will, in the ordinary sense of the term, endure as long as interest in Byron and his writings. Byron's 'Life' has of course not been written for the last time; and when the story of it shall be re-told by a writer of finer perception and stronger pen than the author of 'The Real Lord Byron,'—when it shall be re-told with superior cunning and in a style more acceptable to the taste of a future time,—my volumes will of course be superseded, even as Moore's book of fictions has been superseded by them. But though my book may be utterly forgotten and my name be unremembered in connection with questions of Byronic story, my work will live *in this*,—that all future writers about the poet must accept its facts directly or indirectly, must adopt its main lines, and must be influenced by its 'new views,' which cannot become other than the true 'views of the poet's life.'

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# THE REAL LORD BYRON.

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## CHAPTER I.

### MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT BYRON.

Byron's Temper—His Personal Characteristics—His Freedom from Aristocratic Insolence—His Early Friendships—Homage to Rank—Leigh Hunt's Malice—Familiar Pride.

IN great things and small things it was Byron's lot to be misunderstood during his life, and misrepresented after his death. With the exception of the few, perhaps the few hundred, persons who, with sufficient discrimination for the task, have taken care to separate the few facts from the many fictions of his numerous biographers and the many facts from the few fictions of his published letters and journals, and out of the reliable data to make a memoir of him for themselves, the man is still almost as little known to the students of his poetry as he was to the people who on the eve of his withdrawal from England frowned at him in London drawing-rooms or murmured against him in the London streets.

After all that has been written about him, readers have still to learn the qualities of his temper, the real failings of his nature, the peculiarities of his manner, and even the most conspicuous points of his personal appearance. They have been taught to regard him as a man of mysteries, tortured by remorse for crimes too terrible for confession and guarding secrets too revolting for avowal; whilst in simple truth he went through life from first to last with his heart and all its frailties upon his sleeve, and lived from boyhood to his last hour under glass, that, whilst it magnified all his faults, put all his virtues in miniature. With all his perverse and baneful delight in



mystifying people about trifles, this man of mystery could not to save his life, or what was far dearer to him—his fame,—hold within his own breast a single secret that vexed it seriously. Inspired at times by vanity to make himself the enigma of his period, even in his most perplexing moods he was nothing more than a riddle to be solved by any one of ordinary shrewdness with a brain clear of romantic fancies. What marvellous stuff has been written of the stern and cruel spirit of the misanthrope, who with the sensibility and impulsiveness of the gentler sex could not in his softer moments see misery without weeping over it and seeking to relieve it! Who has not been invited to ponder on the habitual melancholy of the man, who in his brighter time brimmed over with frolic, and even in the sadness of his closing years made the world ring with laughter, and delighted in practical jokes? Who has not heard of his gloomy brow, black locks, dark eyes, and club foot? And yet, his face was not more remarkable for the beauty of its features than for the brightness of its smiles; his hair, light chestnut in childhood, never darkened to the deepest brown of auburn; his eyes were grey-blue; and he hadn't a club foot.

One of the fictions is that, valuing himself inordinately on his birth, he was less proud of the genius that gave us 'Childe Harold' and 'Don Juan,' than of the accidents that made him a Lord of the Upper House. Due in some measure to the biographers who, like Leigh Hunt and Tom Moore, could never lose sight of his patrician quality, this misconception of a nature, innocent of all such miserable weakness, is referable chiefly and in an equal degree to the simplicity and obsequiousness of the many readers, who would have honoured him for being an insignificant peer, even if they had not revered him for being a great poet. It is not usual for those, who plume themselves on their ancestral advantages, to attach themselves strongly to persons of inferior extraction. Though he may admit persons of plebeian birth to his intimacy, the noble, who is greatly prouder of his pedigree than his natural endowments, never fails to draw a line between the acquaintances who are beneath him and the friends who are his equals, and whilst cultivating the former for the entertainment they afford him, to give his warmest affection and perfect confidence only to those who are of his own order. With the single exception of Lord Clare, Byron's closest comrades were found in ranks something or greatly beneath his own.

There were times, doubtless, when Hobhouse was justified in thinking that his friend gave too ready an ear to flatterers whom

he should have kept at a distance. But there never was a time in his whole career when the particular insolence, that biographers are pleased to call 'pride of race,' precluded Byron from sympathising cordially with his social inferiors. In boyhood, whilst composing some of the weakest lines of the 'Hours of Idleness' to the honour of those 'mail-covered Barons who proudly to battle led their vassals from Europe to Palestine's plain' (ancestors, by the way, who are not known to have donned armour in the Crusades or set foot in the Holy Land), he cherished a romantic fondness for the son of one of his Newstead tenants. At Cambridge he conceived a similar affection for the college-chorister (Eddleston), of whom he wrote thus in his nineteenth year to Miss Pigot of Southwell: 'During the whole of my residence at Cambridge we met every day, summer and winter, without passing *one* tiresome moment, and separated each time with increasing reluctance.' Though they were gentlemen by birth, culture, taste and purpose, Hobhouse, Hodgson, Scrope Davies, Charles Skinner Matthews and the other members of his particular set at Trinity, were not the persons to whom he would have attached himself, had he rated his descent at more than its proper worth. The pleasant terms on which he lived during his Cambridge vacations with the Bechers, the Pigots and the other modest gentry of a small provincial town, are evidence that the youthful peer was not so largely animated by a sense of his patrician magnificence, as some of his biographers would have us to believe. In later time this aristocrat with all his overweening arrogance took for his peculiar intimate the son of a Dublin tradesman. Though the main purpose of his almost unpardonably spiteful book was to render Byron contemptible and ludicrous by magnifying his weaknesses, and putting them in the strongest and fiercest light, Leigh Hunt was held to truth on this matter by enmity that was even keener and more rancorous than his animosity against the author of 'Don Juan.' Smarting under the slights put upon him and the injury done him by the men who were of opinion that Byron would suffer in dignity and reputation from his connection with the Hunts, the author of 'Rimini' remarked in a vein scarcely consistent with his affectation of a republican superiority to aristocratic prejudices, 'The manner of such of his lordship's friends as I ever happened to meet with were in fact, with one exception, nothing superior to their birth . . . . It is remarkable (and, indeed, may account for the cry about gentility, which none are so given to as the vulgar) that they were almost all persons of humble origin; one of a race of booksellers; another, the son of a grocer;



another, of a glazier; and a fourth, though the son of a baronet, the grandson of a linen-draper.'

Nor can it be fairly urged, though it has often been unfairly suggested, that Byron surrounded himself with men beneath him in rank, because they rendered deference to his social superiority, and fed him with flattery. Now and again sycophants approached him, as they never fail to approach men of eminence; now and again, in a season of weakness, he yielded more than he should have yielded to their addresses; but the weakness was always transient, and the ascendancy so gained over him was never lasting. Vehement in all things, Byron was especially vehement in his friendships; and despite all that may be urged to the contrary, on the strength of cynical flippancies uttered to astonish his hearers, and bitter words spoken or written under the spur of sudden resentments or the torture of exasperating suspicions, it may be averred stoutly that in choosing his friends and dealing with them, he was altogether controlled by his heart. As for the way in which his friends treated him, it is not more unjust than ludicrous to attribute subserviency to the men who were wont to criticise his writings severely in words spoken to his face, or in letters sent to him through the post. Tom Moore certainly 'noble lords' and 'noble friends' him through six rather tedious volumes, in a fashion that to readers of the present day is not a little laughable and offensive. But in fairness to the biographer it should be remembered that what offends us in this matter was less due to the writer's idolatry of rank than to the etiquette of the period in which he figured as a man of fashion, and first warbler of aristocratic drawing-rooms. In the first twenty years of the present century, when rank was honoured at least verbally in a degree not easily imagined in these last twenty years of the same epoch, it was the mode of our grandfathers to seize every occasion to remind lords of their nobility. The Irish ballad-writer was not singular in this respect. Himself the heir of an opulent and dignified family, and a man whose way of living and thinking had altogether disqualified him for courtly service, Shelley—absolutely devoid of respect for mere conventional nobility—was no less careful to give Byron his title on the written page, and like the author of 'Lalla Rookh' refers to him in letters as his 'noble friend.' Had the author of 'The Cenci' employed himself at Pisa in writing six small-octavo volumes about his 'noble friend's' life and adventures, the performance would have contained almost as many 'lords' and 'noble lords' and 'my noble friends' as may be counted in Moore's occasionally dishonest pages.



Whilst literature honoured peers in this obsolete and curious fashion, and the world at every turn bowed before hereditary rank far lower than it bowed to rank of any other kind, it was not in the nature of things that Byron should be indifferent to the distinction that, coming to him from his ancestors, made him a personage before he had laid aside his Highland petticoats. Naturally it pleased the child to listen to brave stories of the Byrons of olden time, who may (for all any one can say) have led their vassals to the Holy Land, and certainly might have done so for pay or piety had they been so disposed. On taking a poetic turn in his boyhood, it would have been strange had he not written verses on the four brothers who fell at Marston. Nor is it wonderful that, towards the close of his short career, when art required of his pen the picture of a lordly English home, he travelled in memory from his Italian villegiatura to the old familiar abbey (from which Childe Harold had so few years since set forth on his pilgrimage) and sung again, tenderly as in former days, but far more strenuously, of

‘The gallant cavaliers, who fought in vain  
For those who knew not to resign or reign.’

This wholesome pride in his domestic annals peeps forth now and then in all his writings, from his earliest boyish verses to his last dying song, but it never made him insolent or in any other way foolish. Though it was powerless to save him from many errors and much avoidable misery, he had, with all his waywardness and perilous sensibility, too liberal a store of ‘saving common-sense’ to commit the blunders of a pure simpleton. Possibly his arms were set in Italy over his bed, in the manner described by Mr. Leigh Hunt, who records the unimportant fact in the spirit of a discharged valet. Fifty years since beds of state were often so adorned in England, as well as in Italy, just as spoons and hall-chairs and carriage-panels are still ornamented in like manner by owners who have not gone crazy with ancestral insolence. Though Hunt’s malice inspires him to reproduce a piquant story of the anger with which Byron returned a box of pills to an apothecary, because the packet was directed to ‘Mr.’ instead of ‘Lord’ Byron, the malice of five hundred detractors would induce no discriminating reader to believe so egregious and manifest a fabrication. If family pride had been inordinately strong in Byron, he would not have sold Newstead, for the sake of adding a few hundreds yearly to an already sufficient income. Nor was the sentiment in him a peculiar and distinguishing characteristic. In the fulness of its force it was nothing more than a fair share of the almost universal sentiment that causes many

an ordinary, undistinguished English gentleman to resemble General Braddock of 'The Virginians,' in being as proud of his no family in particular, as any peer can well be of his particular family.

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## CHAPTER II.

### THE BYRONS OF ROCHDALE AND NEWSTEAD.

Mediæval Buruns—Sir John the Little with the Great Beard—Filius Naturalis—Thoroton's 'Nottinghamshire'—Elizabeth Halghe's Slip—Knight of the Bath—The Byron Barony—Byronic Fecundity and Longevity—Thomas Shipman's Patron—The Byron-Chaworth Duel—The Berkeley Strain—Taste for the Fine Arts.

OTHER considerations discountenance the notion that the poet regarded his pedigree and the annals of his house with unqualified complacence. For though the Byrons of Newstead co. Notts, and Rochdale co. Lancaster, were a family from which a modest squire of George the Third's England might well have been proud to trace his descent, their annals were deficient in lustre, and their pedigree was not stainless. There are peerages and peerages,—those that contribute to our national glory, and those that are mere affairs of county history. There are peers whose several dignities are the memorials of their ancestors' achievements in the successive generations of successive centuries. There are also peers whose nobility, instead of growing in honour and gathering lustre from the flying decades, has acquired nothing but age from the time that has slowly obscured the services for which it was created. To say of the Byron barony that, on coming to the poet at the close of the last century, it was a specimen of this fruitless, leafless, lifeless nobility, is not to say all that could be urged to its discredit. It is recorded by his not invariably accurate biographers that Byron's school-fellows nick-named him 'the Old English Baron,' in derision of his practice of vaunting how superior his ancestral dignity was to modern creations of a higher grade. If he was guilty of such boastfulness, the boy knew strangely little about the matter.

Too old to be called a mushroom peerage, his dignity was far too young to be rated with ancient baronies. Given in 1643 by Charles the First to Sir John Byron, in acknowledgment of the knight's zeal and devotion, and in the hope that it would lure other gentlemen to their sovereign's standard, it had not completed the hundred and fifty-sixth year of its existence, when

it devolved on Catherine Gordon's son; and it certainly had not grown in social esteem during its passage from its first to its sixth possessor.

Against the antiquity of the Nottinghamshire Byrons nothing can be urged, with the exception of a certain matter to which the reader's attention will be called in another minute. The poet may have had no better authority than his fancy and Collins's 'Peerage' for the precise number of his ancestors' manors when he wrote in Don Juan's '10th Canto,'

'. . . . . a sort of doomsday scroll,  
Such as the conqueror William did repay  
His knights with, lotting others' properties  
Into some sixty thousand new knights' fees.  
'I can't complain, whose ancestors are there,  
Erneis, Radulphus—eight-and-forty manors  
(If that my memory doth not greatly err)  
Were their reward for following Billy's banners :  
And though I can't help thinking 'twas scarce fair  
To strip the Saxons of their *hydes*, like tanners;  
Yet as they founded churches with the produce,  
You'll deem, no doubt, they put it to a good use.'

But whilst there is sufficient evidence that the Byrons came from Normandy in William's train, it is certainly 'as true as ever truth hath been of late' that Erneis de Burun got from the Arch-Invasion a grant of lands in Yorkshire and Lancashire, and that Ralph with the same surname found his proper share of real estate in Nottinghamshire. Nothing more can be told of this pair of rather mythical adventurers. Nor is history much more communicative respecting those of their descendants who were the first Byrons to acquire possessions in Derbyshire, and in later time (under Edward the First) yet more land in Rochdale co. Lancaster. Save that they were great landholders, little is known of these fortunate Byrons during the next eight or nine generations. If any of them went to Palestine they missed the poet to celebrate their achievements until the dawn of the present century, when all their descendant could say of them was that they went thither, arrayed and attended in the manner already mentioned. Now and again one of the broad-acred clan shows himself for a moment, and then passes from the cognizance of history. The name appears in the records of the siege of Calais under our third Edward. Byrons fought at Cressy, and a Byron was at Bosworth on Richmond's side. From the general silence of the chroniclers about their doings it is not unfair to assume that these descendants of Ralph and Erneis were more intent on keeping their old lands, and adding to the number of their manors, than on winning new honours.



And this inference from their historic unobtrusiveness is countenanced by their good fortune in retaining their acres in their hands and keeping their heads on their shoulders, in those troublous times that were so disastrous to adventurous men and ambitious families. Anyhow it is noteworthy how much oftener a Byron is mentioned in connection with a stroke of peaceful acquisitiveness than with an essay of martial daring. Their good fortune in getting and keeping was, however, coming to an end when, on the suppression of the religious houses, Sir John Byron—styled more familiarly and picturesquely ‘Sir John the Little with the Great Beard’—received from Henry the Eighth a grant of the church and priory of Newstead: a property that after remaining for something less than three centuries in the hands of the Byrons passed by sale and purchase from the poet to his former schoolmate, Colonel Wildman. With this parting benefaction, fortune seems to have turned her back on the family who had enjoyed her favour for so many years, whilst doing so little to deserve it. Hitherto they had been rich and undistinguished. Henceforth they went to ruin and nobility.

Had Sir John the Little with the Great Beard either inherited or acquired an hereditary dignity, the honour would not have passed from him to his son, for the simple and sufficient reason that this son—through whom the poet and the five preceding Lords Byron traced their descent from the Norman Buruns—was a bastard. On this point there is no uncertainty. The record of the Herald’s visitation of the County of Lancaster (1567 A.D.) leaves no room for doubt on this matter. Here is what the Elizabethan record says of Sir John the Little with the Great Beard, the poet’s direct lineal ancestor:—

‘S<sup>r</sup> John Byron of Clayton aforesayd Knight, sonne and heire to S<sup>r</sup> Nycholas, married to his firste wiefe Isabell daughter to Peter Shelton of Lynne in Norfolke, and by her had no yssue. After the said S<sup>r</sup> John married to his second Wiefe Elizabeth the daür to W<sup>m</sup>. Costerden of Blakesley in Com Lanc and Wydowe to George Halghe of Halghe Com Lanc Gent, and by her hatte yssue John Byron, his eldest sonne and heire *filius naturalis*. John Byron of Clayton in Com Lanc ar, sonne and heire by deade of gifte to Sir John Byron knt., married Alyce daughter to Sir Nycholas Strelley of Strelley, &c.’

This is explicit and altogether devoid of ambiguity. Sir John Byron, the great-grandfather of the first Lord Byron, was of illegitimate birth; and the Norman blood on which the poet unquestionably reflected with complacence, though never with the absurd pride attributed to him by his biographers, was

tainted with the defilement of bastardy,—a matter of no moment to the physiologist; but a matter of high moment to churchmen, heralds, and lawyers, and to all persons who accept the doctrine of churchmen or the sentiment of heralds.

Though he is not in possession of all the facts that countenance his opinion, Dr. Karl Elze (Byron's German biographer, and the best of all the poet's biographers) declares it inconceivable that the author of 'Childe Harold' was ignorant of this serious defect of his Norman pedigree. On the other hand, Dr. Elze's anonymous English translator insists that Byron may be presumed to have been ignorant of a circumstance that was mentioned in no Book of the Peerage or other genealogical work published during his life. Hence the translator argues that the poet should be acquitted of the meanness and imposture of vaunting his Norman blood, whilst he was well aware of its defilement, and of its consequent inability to bring him honour or estate from any of his ancestors preceding the son of Sir John the Little with the Great Beard. It happens, however, that this disqualifying incident of the Byron lineage is alluded to by Thoroton in the 'History of Nottinghamshire' (1677 A.D.), a work that certainly was not unknown to the poet, and probably afforded him his earliest knowledge of the main features of his ancestral story, and even his first acquaintance with those prime heroes of his house—Erneis and Radulphus. In Thoroton's notice of the Nottinghamshire Byrons, it is observed with quaint caution and delicacy that Sir John the Little with the Great Beard took to him a second wife, 'on whom he begot (soon enough) Sir John Byron of Newstede, who married Alice, the daughter of Sir Nicholas Strelley, of Strelley.' On reading the bracketed words, Byron could not fail to see their meaning. If he needed further enlightenment, he could have obtained it from his lawyer, who was well aware that instead of holding Newstead by inheritance from Sir John the Little with the Great Beard, his client inherited it from Alice Strelley's husband, who acquired the estate by *deed of gift* from his father, from whom he could, as a bastard, have inherited nothing. Or the poet might have gained the needful information from the officers of the Heralds' College, his neighbours of the county, or the curate of Hucknall-Torkard. In Nottinghamshire there were scores of people capable of informing him of the matter that was no secret. If the Newstead Byrons of Charles the Second's time were unaware of the blemish in their pedigree before 1677, none of the family can be suspected of the same ignorance after the publication of Thoroton's 'Nottinghamshire'—a book to be found in every library of the county.



Whilst he is right in maintaining that Byron cannot have been ignorant of this dark page of his familiar history, Dr. Elze errs in imagining that the poet was meanly sensitive and discredibly reticent on the subject. Byron was not the man to attach undue importance to sacerdotal sanction of any kind. Had he lost an estate or a dignity through Sir John's libertinism, he would have thought himself unfortunate, and spoken angrily of his ancestor's morals. Of course he would have preferred a stainless roll. But it was not in his nature to trouble himself seriously about such an accident, or to think less honourably of himself because one of his remote ancestors loved his wife something too soon, and sought the priest's blessing on their union something too late for decorum. Instead of reflecting upon it from the priest's point of view, or the herald's point of view, he regarded his Norman descent from the physiologist's standpoint, which was not affected by the naughty behaviour of Madame Elizabeth Halghe *née* Costerden (or *Constantine*, as the lady's maiden surname is spelt in Thoroton's book). It was enough for him to know or to fancy that the pluck, and energy, and chivalric sentiment of the Norman Buruns had come to him through twenty or more generations. It was enough for him to know that Alice Strelley's husband was his 'father's son.' Of course he was not perpetually calling attention to the awkward affair. When he talks of his pedigree, a man is under no obligation to proclaim its blemishes, or speak of the black sheep of the family. Thus far Byron may have been, and was reticent; but so far was he from trying to conceal under falsehood a matter that was no secret to the antiquaries of Nottinghamshire, and all persons curious in aristocratic genealogies, he could allude to the affair with lightness and pleasantry in pages written for the amusement of any one who cared to peruse them. Few persons will question that Elizabeth Halghe's slip and its consequences were in his mind when, after condensing his view of Catherine the Great's character and conduct into one of the most pungent and notorious couplets of 'Don Juan,' he wrote:—

'But oh, thou grand legitimate Alexander!  
*Her son's son*, let not this last phrase offend  
 Thine ear, if it should reach—and now rhymes wander  
 Almost as far as Petersburg, and lend  
 A dreadful impulse to each loud meander  
 Of murmuring Liberty's wide waves, which blend  
 Their roar even with the Baltic's—so you be  
*Your father's son, 'tis quite enough for me.*  
 To call men love-begotten, or proclaim  
 Their mothers as the antipodes of Timon,  
 That hater of mankind, would be a shame,  
 A libel, or whate'er you please to rhyme on:



But people's ancestors are history's game ;  
 And if one lady's slip should leave a crime on  
 All generations, I should like to know  
 What pedigree the best would have to show ?

The sixteenth century did not end before the Nottinghamshire Byrons had felt the annoyances, if not the humiliations of pecuniary embarrassment. After living at Newstead with profuseness and ostentation, Alice Strelley's husband left a mortgaged estate and costly establishment to his heir, who was made a Knight of the Bath on the occasion of James the First's coronation. 'I do therefore advise you,' the Earl of Shrewsbury wrote to the young man, immediately after his father's death, 'that so soon as you have, in such sort as shall be fit, finished your father's funerals, to dispose and disperse that great household, reducing them to the number of forty or fifty at the most, of all sorts; and, in my opinion, it will be far better for you to live for a time in Lancashire than in Notts, for many good reasons that I can tell you when we meet, fitter for words than writing.' Being good, this advice was probably not taken. Young men are apt to think lightly of counsel supported by sound reasons. Lancashire was further than Newstead from the Court where the Knight of the Bath had friends and hopes of preferment. At Rochdale the young man would be amongst comparative strangers; at Newstead he was surrounded by friends who had known him from boyhood. It may, therefore, be taken for granted that the new Chief of the Byrons was slow to act on the Earl's suggestions of prudence, and never acted on them with resoluteness and perseverance. Anyhow, it is certain that the estate, which came to the Knight of the Bath burdened with mortgages and liabilities, passed to his heir under still more disadvantageous conditions; and that when troubles grew and thickened about Charles the First, troubles were also growing and thickening about the Byrons, who could barely pay their own rather stately way, on being invited to raise money as they best could for the king's use, and help him with their swords and men to prostrate his enemies.

For staking heavily on the Crown, and venturing their all in its service, the Cavaliers of Newstead were rewarded with impoverishment and a peerage. It would have been better for them if they had received only the former part of the reward, and missed the barony, that was only an incumbrance to them in their fallen fortunes. Without their nobility they might have recovered from their poverty; but with it, as things went in the later half of the seventeenth century, they were doomed to go from bad to worse; and when it has gone half the

way to ruin, nobility usually finishes the journey. The Byrons were singularly unfortunate when once fortune, after befriending them so long, deserted them for ever. Crippled with a peerage they scrambled on for something more than a century and a half, to be broken up and extinguished by a man of rare genius—the only man of genius they ever produced. The poet killed the family of which he was abundantly proud. There is still a Lord Byron; for generations to come there will doubtless be gentlemen and gentlewomen of the name figuring in the peerage, and playing minor parts on the social stage; but for all practical purposes the family perished, territorially and historically, with the man who made it famous.

The first Lord Byron having died without male issue, the barony went to his brother, whose long epitaph, telling nearly all one knows or wants to know about him, is still to be read in Hucknall-Torkard Church, where the poet was buried, after the Dean's refusal to give him sleeping-room in Westminster Abbey. One of the poet's quite erroneous notions about his own people was that they had nothing to do with longevity or livers. 'The Byrons,' he used to say, 'die early and have no livers.' Another of his fancies about them was that they were not prolific—a failing for which he used to console himself by reflecting that the fiercer and nobler animals had few cubs. The family had, upon the whole, sound livers and big broods of babies; and its members went to the proverbial threescore and ten years and upwards, like the men and women of other families, when they steadily eschewed late hours and excess in drink. On all these points he was mistaken. Byron himself had a good liver till he destroyed it, and it certainly was due to no constitutional weakness that he was not the father of a numerous family. The second lord of the family is an example that it was not impossible for a Byron to live long and beget a numerous progeny; for he had ten children by his first wife, and survived his seventy-third year, after 'repurchasing part of the ancient inheritance' of the seven Byrons (himself and his six brothers), who 'faithfully served Charles the First in the Civil War, suffered much for their loyalty, and' (the epitaph adds with some obscurity of expression) 'lost all their present fortune.' This worthy gentleman's eldest son, who became the third Lord Byron, is chiefly memorable for having written some execrably bad verses to his poetical friend, Thomas Shipman, and for being the nobleman whose marriage with a daughter of the Viscount Chaworth was accountable for his famous descendant's consanguinity with Mary Chaworth. If this Lord Byron was not a foolish and stupid person, his wretched doggerel in Shipman's 'Carolina or



Loyal Poems' (1683) does him gross injustice. The fourth lord does not seem to have been a man of brilliant parts or any force of character ; but he played with the fine arts, and together with other children he begat two sons, who in very different ways distinguished themselves enough to be much talked about,—the fifth Lord Byron who killed his cousin and neighbour, Mr. Chaworth, in a duel of so singular a kind, that he was tried for wilful murder by his peers, who, acquitting him of that gravest offence, found him guilty of nothing worse than manslaughter ; and Admiral John Byron, the hardy and daring sailor, to whose misadventures at sea the poet referred in the familiar lines of the ' Epistle ' to his sister, Augusta :—

' A strange doom is thy father's son's, and past  
Recalling, as it lies beyond redress ;  
Reversed for him our grandsire's fate of yore,—  
He had no rest at sea, nor I on shore.'

In the remarkable letter which he wrote at Genoa to Mons<sup>r</sup> Coulmann in July 1823, shortly before his departure for Greece, the poet observed, ' As to the Lord Byron who killed Mr. Chaworth in a duel, so far from retiring from the world, he made the tour of Europe, and was appointed Master of the Staghouuds after that event, and did not give up society until his son had offended him by marrying in a manner contrary to his duty. So far from feeling any remorse for having killed Mr. Chaworth, who was a fire-eater (spadassin), and celebrated for his quarrelsome disposition, he always kept the sword which he used on that occasion in his bed-chamber, where it still was *when he died.*' From these statements, the accuracy of which has never been questioned, it appears that the fracas and subsequent trial did not cause the survivor of the two combatants so much discredit as successive writers have represented ; and that had he lived with ordinary prudence and decency during the subsequent three-and-thirty years of his time in this world, no great amount of posthumous obloquy would have been put upon him for the affair, that created prodigious noise and excitement at the time of its occurrence.

In fairness to a man, who has no especial title to charitable consideration, it may be admitted that notwithstanding its irregularity and several suspicious circumstances, the fatal duel would not have justified society in sending the survivor to Coventry. The blame seems from the evidence to have been equally divided. The quarrel arose out of a trivial dispute—no uncommon thing in duels. Both of the combatants were so quick-tempered and vehement in passion, that they may be presumed to have been alike captious and offensive. As to the



statement that Lord Byron thrust his adversary into the fatal room, Mr. Chaworth was not a man to be pushed about like a little boy. He entered the room, and entered it with the intention of fighting. The absence of seconds and the darkness of the chamber, lit with only a single candle, were features of the case to be regarded as matters for which the enemies were alike accountable. Lastly, the duel was fought with swords, Mr. Chaworth being well known to be a much better swordsman than his antagonist. The first impression that Lord Byron took his adversary at a disadvantage, and slew him in a dark corner without warning, was removed by the evidence. In short, it was a case of two practised duellists flying at one another in the fierceness of rage, begotten of much wine and mutual insolence. Had Lord Byron fallen, there would have been an outcry against Mr. Chaworth, whose superior swordsmanship would, in that case, have been produced in testimony that he pushed the quarrel to an immediate issue, in order to fight with the weapon of which he was a consummate master.

But though he was less culpable in this ugly business than people have been led to imagine, the fifth Lord Byron deserved the evil fame that covered him in his old age as with a garment, and still clings to him, though he has been entombed for more than eighty years. A morose husband, tyrannical father, hard landlord and harsh master, he was detested by the peasantry of Nottinghamshire, who spoke of him habitually as the 'wicked Lord Byron,' and sincerely believed there was no enormity of crime of which he was incapable in his darkest and most vindictive moods. Of course, things were said of him that on inquiry were found to be untrue. But when due allowance has been made for exaggeration, it is certain that in his closing years his nature was detestable and his position pitiable.

He did not, as rumour averred, shoot his coachman in a sudden frenzy of rage, and then throw the man's dead body into the carriage, whilst Lady Byron was seated in it. He did not, as it was reported, throw his wife into one of the Newstead ponds with the purpose of drowning her; but he drove her from Newstead by ill-usage; and when she had fled from her proper home, he called to her vacant place a common woman who was styled 'Lady Betty' by the satirists of the village. Though none but servants attended him at Newstead in his last illness, the solitude of his joyless decline was not so complete as successive writers have represented, for his niece, Mrs. Leigh (General Leigh's wife), never ceased to visit him; but the Nottinghamshire nobility avoided him, and it was seldom that any of the minor gentry of the county called upon him. Having

quarrelled with his heir for marrying a cousin whom he loved, this curious old reprobate let the Abbey go to ruin, and cut down the timber on the estate. Always in straits for money, though he spent little on hospitality, he replenished his empty exchequer by making an illegal sale of Rochdale property, to the serious injury of his successor. After losing his son and his son's son, the miserable old man transferred something of his aversion for them to 'the little boy at Aberdeen,' as he invariably styled the future poet and sixth lord. There are grounds for the opinion that he was entreated to contribute something towards the charges of the education of this little boy at Aberdeen. If the prayer was made, it was unsuccessful; for the old man never sent a doit to the widow, who, rearing the child in the poverty to which a Byron had reduced her, lived through a hard time at Aberdeen. And when at last this little boy came to Newstead, in the company of his irascible mother and pious Scotch nurse, he found the Abbey in ruins and its only tenantable rooms empty of furniture. And yet the 'old lord,'—the 'wicked old Lord Byron'—had to the end of his wicked existence one or two innocent pastimes. Having built mock forts about the lake in his park, and put a fleet of toy gun-boats on the water, he used to amuse himself, like the big, hoary-headed baby that he was, with mock-fights of a naval character—the toy ships firing away at the forts, which returned the fire in gallant style. And when he was weary of this ridiculous game, the old man used to lie on the ground and gossip with the crickets, whom he loved far more than 'the little boy at Aberdeen.' When the crickets were troublesome, he used to whip them with a wisp of hay; and the crickets are said to have left the Abbey in a body, as soon as their one friend of human kind was dead, and never to have returned thither.

On the death (19th May, 1798) of this lord of evil fame and miserable nature, 'the little boy at Aberdeen' became the sixth Lord Byron of Rochdale co. Lancaster, the master of the dilapidated Abbey of Newstead, and the Hereditary (?) Chief of all the descendants of Erneis and Radulphus, when he was just ten years and four months of age, and when the Barony—that had not illustrated itself by winning a higher rank in the peerage—had been in existence just one hundred and fifty-five years.

The family was certainly an ancient one; but whilst houses may be eminent without being ancient, for families to be illustrious it is not enough that they should be old. Had the Byrons of Rochdale and Newstead possessed higher claims to



reverence, the poet would have said less of their antiquity. With the single exception of Admiral John Byron (the fifth lord's brother), who seems to have derived his pluck and devilry and delight in adventure from the Stratton Berkeleys, the Byrons had lived in the land for upwards of seven hundred years without producing a man of conspicuous natural eminence. When the most favourable view is taken of the soldier and political partisan, who won the Barony from Charles the First, he is seen to be a person of merely respectable endowments. On a greater field, and under more auspicious circumstances, he might have figured in history as a considerable soldier; for in addition to the fidelity, which is his strongest title to honourable recollection, he was well endowed with energy, courage, and common-sense. But it would be simply ridiculous to rate him with men of genius.

So much arrant nonsense has been written about the poet and his remote forefathers by literary charlatans—whose only dispute amongst themselves turns on the question whether his genius should be referred altogether to his Norman extraction or should be regarded as the result of a felicitous fusion of Norman force and Celtic sensibility—it is well for readers to be assured how little countenance is lent to such fanciful theories by the history of his progenitors in this country. Till Byron's genius broke suddenly upon the world, and captivated it almost in a single hour, no one ever thought of looking to his peculiar people for any signal exhibition of intellectual power. In the whole peerage no family appeared less likely to produce a poet who would make a new period in the history of English literature. Not that the family was exceptionally wanting in refinement and taste. On the contrary, from Charles the Second's restoration the Newstead Byrons had taken an interest in letters and the fine arts. Though the third lord's poetical performances were contemptible, his friendship for Thomas Shipman indicates a creditable concern for literature and its followers. The fourth Lord Byron inherited a taste for painting from his mother (a Chaworth), and produced some landscapes, which Sir William Musgrave reproduced in etching. One of this lord's sons—Richard Byron, who took holy orders—has a modest niche in the Temple of Fame for copying Rembrandt's famous landscape of the 'Three Trees' so skilfully, that the copy was mistaken and bought by a connoisseur for the original work. And though the earlier book exposed him to charges of imaginative exaggeration, and even to a suggestion of inaccuracy on matters about which he was especially bound to be precisely truthful, Admiral Byron's famous 'Narrative' of



his adventures on the coast of Patagonia, and his scarcely less famous 'Voyage round the World,' are performances of no common merit, and deserved, on literary grounds, to be favourite reading with the author's grandson, who, after throwing Don Juan on the sandy fringe of Haidée's charming island, says of the adventurer's troubles from shipwreck,—

'And need he had of slumber yet, for none  
Had suffered more—his hardships were comparative  
To those related in my grand-dad's "Narrative!"'

### CHAPTER III.

#### BYRON'S NEAR ANCESTORS.

Admiral Byron—'Foul-weather Jack'—Mad Jack Byron—The Marchioness of Carmarthen (Lady Conyers)—Augusta Byron's Birth—Miss Gordon of Gight—The Poet's Birth—His Lameness.

To argue that a man of the nineteenth century derives the strongest elements of his nature from a man of the eleventh century, because he is known to have descended from one of the knightly 'followers of Billy's banners,' without making any account of the influence of the twenty and more infusions of blood from other stocks, each of which must have modified, or at least should—in the absence of evidence to the contrary—be assumed to have modified the characteristics of the Norman progenitor; and to dress up this marvellous inference with much jargon about the 'influence of race,' is to play the part of a pedant without common-sense, or of a fool with just a little learning, and no more.

Of two-thirds of the families with which Byron's ancestors in the direct male line intermarried, and from which some modifying influences must have come to the Byron nature, nothing is known or can be known. And even if one could obtain precise information respecting all these families, and more especially of the particular women of them who mated with Byrons, it would be impossible to say how far so many and various influences changed the moral and mental qualities, which passed to his descendants from a Norman of whom nothing is known beyond his name, the number of his manors, and the fact that he took part in a great military movement. It will contribute more to the purpose of those,

who would account for the peculiarities of the poet's temper and intellect, to examine the natures of his parents, his father's parents, and his grandfather's (Admiral Byron's) mother.

In marrying Frances, the second daughter of the fourth Baron Berkeley of Stratton, William the fourth Lord Byron took a wife who seems to have transmitted to his and her descendants the vehemence and impulsiveness and waywardness which were characteristics of her race. It is certain that her descendants differed in these qualities from any earlier Byrons of whose tempers we have sure information. It makes also for the point to which these remarks tend, that Lady Byron's sister, Barbara, married John Trevanion of Caerhayes, Cornwall, and had by him a daughter, Sophia, who by her marriage with her first cousin, Admiral Byron, became the mother of that brilliant scapegrace, Jack Byron, and grandmother of the poet. It follows that Jack Byron of the Guards, who seduced the Marchioness of Carmarthen, and then despoiled Catherine Gordon of Gight, took the Berkeley blood and nature from both his parents, each of whom was the offspring of a Berkeley. It is more reasonable to refer the impulsiveness and vehemence of Jack Byron and of his son, the poet, to these ladies of the great House of Berkeley, than to account for those qualities of the father and son by reference to the absolutely unknown natures of Erneis and Radulphus of the eleventh century.

Greatly though they differed in several respects, there was a strong resemblance between Frances Berkeley's two sons,—the fifth Lord Byron and his brother, the Admiral. In the former, the Berkeley vehemence changed to violence, and in his later years degenerated into unsocial moroseness and malignity. In the latter, it was a generous fire that animating the sailor for a career of adventure was attended with a sweetness of disposition by no means uncommon in emotional natures. But in both brothers the Berkeley fire showed itself, burning with poisonous fume in the one, and blazing out cheerily in the other.

Fortunate on shore, John Byron was luckless at sea. It would be an exaggeration to say that he never went to sea without encountering disaster; for the affair of Chaleur Bay—when with three ships he destroyed three French ships of war, with twenty schooners, sloops, and other armed vessels—was no less successful than brilliant. His 'Voyage of Discovery' accomplished its objects, in spite of unlooked-for difficulties. But on returning to England after his

indecisive engagement with D'Estaing, in which he displayed more intrepidity than tactical adroitness, the sailor, whose significant nickname in the Navy was 'Foul-weather Jack,' had weathered more storms than any other Admiral of 'the Service.' Sailors and ministers being alike distrustful of unlucky men, it is possible the intrepid navigator's proverbial 'bad luck' was the reason why he was never employed again in the way of his profession, after his return from the West Indies in 1779. His biographers erred in supposing the Admiral never again desired active service. If he did not *seek* employment, there is evidence that he would gladly have taken another command, and suffered from chagrin at the Admiralty's neglect to offer him a ship. He was smarting under this disappointment in the spring of 1782, when the prospect of an immediate peace made him despair of ever again getting employment. Four years later the gallant and luckless sailor encountered a worse enemy to naval ambition than even the longest and most exasperating peace. On 10th April, 1786, he died in his sixty-third year, leaving two sons—John, who was the poet's father, and George-Anson, who distinguished himself in the Navy, and was the father of the poet's successor in the barony—together with three daughters, one of whom (Frances) married General Leigh (Colonel of the 20th Regiment of Infantry), whilst another (Juliana Elizabeth), by her marriage with the fifth Lord Byron's only son, became the mother of the heir-apparent to the barony, through whose untimely death at Corsica, in 1794, the poet succeeded to his place in the Peerage.

Like his uncle the wicked lord, and like his son the poet, the Admiral's eldest son John—nicknamed 'Mad Jack' by his brother-officers of the Guards—was the subject of many scandalous stories that originated in the malice and imaginative humour of gossip. As Byron justly remarked in his letter from Genoa to Monsieur Coulmann, 'it is not by "brutality" that a young officer of the Guards seduces and marries a marchioness, and marries two heiresses.' Instead of being remarkable for harshness and grossness, as posthumous scandal represented him, 'Mad Jack Byron' was a gentleman of elegant figure, charming address, and winning smile. Even to the last of his scarcely honourable days he retained much of the facial beauty that had distinguished him in his youth, and reappeared in the lovely lineaments of his only son. In her frequent fits of fury with her boy, Catherine Gordon used to upbraid him for being a Byron all over; and in her no less frequent fits of tenderness for him, she used to put hysterical kisses on the eyes



that reminded her of his father. But though he was irresistible in drawing-rooms, by virtue of his riant beauty and musical joyousness, Mad Jack was from his boyhood a sad libertine, and, after falling into poverty, a pitifully mean fellow.

Educated first at Westminster School and then at a French military academy, where he learnt to prefer life in France to existence in England, he served with his regiment in America whilst a stripling, and on his return to London lost no time in winning the affection of the Marchioness of Carmarthen, the wife of the heir to the Dukedom of Leeds, to whom she had already given three children. At the beginning of this *liaison* with a woman whose beauty surpassed even her rank, and who had not completed her twenty-third year, John Byron was under age; his years numbering no more than twenty-two when he married the lady immediately after her divorce from her first husband in May 1778, the year in which she became Lady Conyers (Baroness Conyers, in her own right), on the death of her father, the fourth Earl of Holderness. After resting for a brief while at the lady's house near Doncaster, where the poet was a visitor thirty-five years later, the young people went to France, to escape from English obloquy and English creditors. Never returning to her native country, after she left it under these painful circumstances, Lady Conyers died abroad on January 26, 1784—from her husband's cruelty, it was whispered in Mayfair: or, as the poet assured Monsieur Coulmann, from her imprudence in accompanying her husband to a hunt before she had completed her recovery from the accouchement which gave birth to Augusta (afterwards the Honourable Mrs. Leigh), the second, but only surviving, issue of her father's first marriage. Apart from rumour, there is no evidence that John Byron treated his first wife with harshness or neglect. Certainly he had good reason to wish her long life, for she had an estate for life that yielded her £4000 a-year—a revenue that enabled him to pass his time pleasantly in the gayest and, in the last century, perhaps the cheapest capital of Europe. On her death, the young man of luxurious tastes and considerable debts was penniless.

Returning to England in search of an heiress, whose possessions would extricate him from his pecuniary difficulties, he found one (in the spring of 1785) at Bath—not so rich as he could have wished, but still rich enough for his immediate requirements. In money, land, and bank-shares this heiress (Miss Gordon, of Gight, in Aberdeenshire) had about £23,000, a fortune that rumour had doubled. To the widower, only twenty-eight years old at the time of his wife's death, Miss Gordon's actual and

unexaggerated estate would have seemed so inadequate to his necessities, that it is difficult to believe he would have embarrassed himself with so unattractive and uncongenial a companion had he not, at the time of marrying her, been under a misconception as to the magnitude of her possessions. Drowning men, however, catch at straws; and 'Mad Jack Byron' may have persuaded himself that £23,000 would, with clever management, put him in easy circumstances. Anyhow he married the lady on May 13, 1785, in England, and remarried her in Scotland, ten months later;—the earlier wedding being celebrated at St. Michael's Church, Bath, by the rector in the presence of Dr. and Mrs. Hay; and the second wedding being done with a contract of marriage in Scotch form, drawn with legal exactness, and signed by the bride and her groom, in March 1786. The Bath marriage, which seems to have been a private affair, may have resulted from 'Mad Jack's' desire to preclude inconvenient demands by Miss Gordon's kindred for a pre-nuptial settlement, or from his wish to qualify himself to be her travelling-companion from the resort of fashionable idlers and invalids to her native shire. The second marriage may have been performed for the convenience of the lady's Scotch lawyers, or to satisfy the religious scruples of her Scotch cousins. If there was an elopement in the affair, it must have been a merely formal elopement from the Somerset wells, that was arranged to gratify the lady's desire for a romantic passage into matrimony; for when she determined to give them to Captain Byron, Miss Gordon was Mistress of her person and worldly goods. Her father having already committed suicide, there was no guardian with power to stay her on the way to ruin, as she was of age. In Medwin's book, Byron is said to have spoken of his father's elopement with Miss Gordon; but if the poet did not talk loosely to Medwin, the author of the 'Conversations' was a bad listener and careless reporter. Early in the summer following the date of the Scotch matrimonial contract, 'Mad Jack' carried his bride to Paris and Chantilly, where they soon made away with what remained to them of the £3000 which the heiress possessed in ready money at the time of the wedding, and the £600 obtained from the sale of her two shares of the Aberdeen Banking Company. Just one year and ten months after her Scotch re-marriage, Catherine Gordon Byron, having returned from France to Great Britain *viâ* Boulogne and Dover, was in Holles Street, Cavendish Square, with a babe in her arms, and heaviness at her heart. During her brief stay in that street she was for days together without money in her purse. Since her marriage she had discovered that her husband had



married her only for the sake of her fortune ; and in Holles Street she learnt that when the needful arrangements had been made with his creditors, she would be left with only a pittance, barely sufficient for the subsistence of herself, her husband, the infant in her arms, and his child by Lady Conyers.

Hitherto there has been a question whether the poet was born at Dover, or Holles Street, Cavendish Square, London. That his sister believed him to have been born in London is shown by the inscription of the mural tablet which she placed to his memory in the chancel of Hucknall-Torkard Church ; and all the other witnesses to the point, who agree with the inscription, may be presumed to have gained their information directly or indirectly from her. But Dallas—the author of ‘*Recollections of Lord Byron*’ (1824), who might be thought more likely than the Honourable Mrs. Leigh to have known the truth of the matter—had a strong opinion that Catherine Gordon’s boy first saw the light at Dover. Mr. Dallas received the lady at his house in Boulogne when she was on her way to England ; and he certainly was not without grounds for his impression that she was taken with pains whilst crossing the Channel, and was delivered of her child at the English sea-port. It is however certain that Dallas was mistaken, for there exists conclusive evidence that the birth took place in London, and that Mrs. Byron was attended at her accouchement by the famous surgeon, John Hunter, who before her departure from London for Aberdeenshire, gave the young mother instructions respecting the kind of shoe her child should wear on coming to need shoes. At a later date (towards the end of 1790, or in an early month in 1791), Hunter wrote to Dr. Livingstone, of Aberdeen, on the same subject ; but either through misapprehension on the part of the Scotch doctor, or through the inexpertness of a Scotch shoemaker, the result of the directions were so unsatisfactory that it became necessary for Mrs. Leigh (General Leigh’s wife)—then living at 39 Brompton Row, Knightsbridge—to call upon the London surgeon for more precise guidance. This application to Hunter for further counsel was in May 1791 ; and when a shoe had been made in accordance with his orders, Mrs. Leigh sent it to her sister-in-law in North Britain.

And here it may be remarked that the lameness, which occasioned the poet so much discomfort of body and mental distress from his childhood to his last days, was due to the contraction of the Achilles tendon of each foot, which, preventing him from putting his heels to the ground, compelled him to walk on the balls and toes of his feet. Both feet may have been equally well formed, save in this sinew, till one of



them was subjected to injudicious surgery; the right being, however, considerably smaller than the left. Instead of being congenital, the slight contraction of the left Achilles tendon may have been the result of the patient's habit of stepping only on the fore part of the foot, so as to accommodate its movements to the action of the other extremity. But though it may not have existed in the earlier years of his childhood, the contraction of the comparatively normal sinew was noticed by Trelawny when he made the *post mortem* examination of both extremities at Missolonghi. The right Achilles tendon ('tendo Achillis,' as it is styled in books of anatomy), however, was so much contracted that the poet was never able to put the foot flat upon the ground; always using for it a boot made with a high heel, and fitted with a padding inside under the heel of the foot.<sup>1</sup> This foot was also considerably distorted so as to turn inwards—a malformation that may have been caused altogether by the violence with which the foot was treated by the less intelligent of the boy's surgical operators, and more especially by Lavender, the Nottingham quack.

It is therefore manifest that Byron's lameness was of a kind far more afflicting to the body and vexatious to the spirits than the lameness of such an ordinary club-foot as disfigured Sir Walter Scott. With an ordinary club-foot to plant firmly on the ground, Byron could have taken all the bodily exercise needful for the natural correction of his morbid tendency to fatten. He would have moved about awkwardly, and to the derision of his least generous playmates; but he would not have been debarred from participation in *any* of their manlier sports. Instead of musing or moping for hours together on the famous tombstone, he might have distinguished himself in the Harrow playing-grounds at cricket and even at leap-bar. A few years later, instead of standing sadly in the corners of London ball-rooms, eyeing enviously the young men whirling round with fair partners, he would have joined in some of the dances, and though unable to excel in it might even have delighted in the waltz of his period, which he affected to abhor, as unfit alike for men and women. Better still, instead of taking most of his out-door exercise in the lazy yacht or easy saddle, he would have been a bold climber of mountains.

To the question why Byron did not bear his lameness as

<sup>1</sup> By eminent surgeons I am informed that this contraction of the Achilles tendon is regarded by members of their learned profession as a variety of club-foot, though the foot itself may in other respects be shapely. But as neither of Byron's feet was deformed so as to be *club-like*, which is the ordinary meaning of the familiar term, I hold myself justified in saying he had not a club-foot.

bravely and cheerily as Scott bore his lameness, one answer is, that whilst the Scotch poet suffered from nothing worse than an ordinary club-foot the author of 'Childe Harold' endured a lameness far more trying to health and spirits. Had Sir Walter been constrained to pick his way through life on his toes, 'hopping' about like a bird (to adopt Leigh Hunt's way of sneering at a comrade's grievous affliction), he would certainly have been less happy. And had Byron been able to walk about like a man, albeit with an ordinary club-foot, he would have been less often stricken with melancholy and moved to breathe the fierce breath of anger.

## CHAPTER IV.

### MORE OF 'MAD JACK BYRON.'

Holles Street, Cavendish Square—Augusta's Grandmother—'Baby Byron'  
—Mad Jack in Scotland—Catherine Gordon's Characteristics—Mad Jack's Death.

THAT Captain and Mrs. Byron returned from France to England without having fully realised the magnitude and urgency of their pecuniary difficulties may be inferred from the character of the quarter in which they took a furnished house on their arrival in London for a term of three months, ending on April 8th, 1788. Another indication, that the lady, on coming to Holles Street, still regarded herself as a gentlewoman, who might spend money freely, is found in the engagement of the first surgeon of his time to attend at her accouchement. Before she left the street, the poor lady had reason to take a different view of her position. Her land and all its appurtenances having been sold during her residence in France, Captain Byron's creditors clamoured for a speedy settlement of their claims on the money coming to him from the sale of his wife's estate; when, instead of sending him the means of pacifying these eager claimants, the Scotch lawyers were even reluctant to remit enough money for his current expenses. Had it not been for his sister, Mrs. Leigh, who gave him more of her pin-money than she could well afford, 'Mad Jack' would have been without the guineas needful for his simple amusements about town. On coming from the seclusion of her chamber, poor Mrs. Byron, when she was not nursing her baby, found her

principal employment in writing letters to her Edinburgh lawyer. Possibly the Writer to the Signet was moved by his client's pitiful epistles to push matters forward to a final arrangement, but to the miserable gentlewoman he seemed to act with exasperating slowness; and before she received the remittance which enabled her to journey northwards, she had been for the greater part of a fortnight without a penny in her pocket.

Before she returned to her proper country, the burden that had come to her from her own want of prudence was lightened by the Dowager-Countess of Holderness (Captain Byron's whilom mother-in-law), whose blue eyes and golden hair, with a score of other charms beseeeming 'the belle of the Hague,' had won an English coronet for her nearly half a century since, when Lord Holderness was the British Plenipotentiary to the States-General of the United Provinces. At Chantilly little Augusta had lived under her father's roof, and she was one of the party entertained by Mr. Dallas at Boulogne, when he had occasion to observe that Mrs. Byron would soon become a mother. But as the time neared for her brother's appearance on the scene, little Augusta (in her fifth year) was packed off to stay with her grandmother, who had tender yearnings for the child, though little reason to like the child's father. And now, to Captain Byron's lively contentment, the Countess declared her wish to undertake the child's nurture, and to provide for her. Catherine Gordon must also have received the Countess's proposal with satisfaction. In justice, however, to the gentler side of a nature by no means altogether lovable, it should be recorded of Mrs. Byron that she could not surrender unregretfully the child who had been her best companion many a day at Chantilly, when her husband was amusing himself in Paris. There was another reason why Mrs. Byron cared for the child, whom she had nursed in France with exemplary tenderness and devotion through a severe illness, that for several days promised to end in death. Thirteen years later, when Augusta and her stepmother came together again, there was small need for Mrs. Byron to remind her husband's daughter of this passage of her childhood; for Byron's sister had never forgotten the service of love. Still it was not in the nature of things for Catherine Gordon to resist the Countess's proposal. So the brother and sister, whose mutual love is recorded in deathless song, went different ways—'Baby Byron' (as Augusta used to call him after he had risen to universal celebrity) journeying slowly northwards to the land of mountain and mist,



whilst she went to the roof of the Countess, who, growing mightily fond of her grandchild, used to tell her acquaintances, in her own peculiar Dutch-English, that the girl would be her 'residee-legatoo.'

Though she no longer possessed a patch of land in the county, Catherine Gordon was 'going home' as she travelled towards Aberdeenshire; but to her husband (when a year and half later he set out to join his wife in Scotland), the journey to Aberdeen where Mrs. Byron, after staying for a while with some of her relations, had settled herself in lodgings, was a journey into exile. It was a dismal prospect for the man of luxurious tastes, who, more French than English in his appearance and habits, delighted in the sunshine and mirth and vintages of the land, where he received the more important part of his earlier training; the land that, instead of crying 'Fie!' at his naughtiness, had welcomed him all the more cordially for having carried a peeress in her own right away from her lawful husband. In France he had lived intimately with the great Marshal Biron, who hailed him as a cousin. In Paris his elegance, beauty, gallantry, horsemanship, had won the admiration of *salons*, whose wits, men and women alike, held precisely his own views on questions of religion and morals. The gentleman shuddered at the imagination of what lay before him in Scotland—a land of bad cookery and worse manners, of bleak winds and dismal skies, of boors and fanatics. He shuddered again as he mentally compared the beauty and cleverness and gaiety of Lady Conyers, with the homely aspect, provincial style and intolerable temper of Mrs. Byron, to whom he was going reluctantly; the peeress who had 4000*l.* a-year, with the petty laird's daughter whose fortune had dwindled to a pitiful 3000*l.*

The comparison would have been unfavourable to Mrs. Byron had he compared her with a woman of ordinary attractiveness. For though she had royal blood in her veins, and belonged to the superior branch of the Gordons, it would not have been easy to find a gentlewoman whose person and countenance were less indicative of ancestral purity. A dumpy young woman, with a large waist, florid complexion, and homely features, she would have been mistaken anywhere for a small farmer's daughter or a petty tradesman's wife, had it not been for her silks and feathers, the rings on her fingers and the jewellery about her short, thick neck. At this early time of her career, she was not quite so graceless and awkward as Mrs. Cadurcis (in Lord Beaconsfield's 'Venetia'), but it was already manifest that she would be cumbrously corpulent on coming to middle

age; and even in her twenty-fifth year she walked in a way that showed how absurdly she would waddle through drawing-rooms and gardens on the development of her unwieldy person. In the last century it was not uncommon for matrons of ancient lineage to possess little learning and no accomplishments; but Miss Gordon's education was very much inferior to the education usually accorded to the young gentlewomen of her period. Unable to speak any other language, she spoke her mother tongue with a broad Scotch brogue, and wrote it in a style that in this politer age would be discreditable to a waiting-woman. Though she was a writer of long epistles, they seldom contained a capital letter, or a mark of punctuation, to assist the reader in the sometimes arduous task of discovering their precise meaning; and though she could spell the more simple words correctly, when she was writing in a state of mental placidity, she never used her pen in moments of excitement, without committing comical blunders of orthography. To Captain Byron, however, the lady's temper was more grievous than her defects of person, breeding, and culture. It should, however, be remembered by readers, who would do her justice, that Mrs. Byron was by no means devoid of the shrewdness and ordinary intelligence of inferior womankind, and was capable of generous impulses to the persons, whom in her frequent fits of uncontrollable fury she would assail with unfeminine violence—and even with unnatural cruelty.

On the road to Aberdeen, where for his own gratification he could arrive none too late, Captain Byron paid a visit to one or two agreeable houses, and so long as he was the guest of hospitable lairds, who gave him the best wine of their cellars and the best sport of their domains, the man of pleasure found life in Scotland endurable, and could pay himself compliments on the address and philosophical cheerfulness with which he accepted the usages of a semi-barbarous people, and like a consummate man of the world accommodated himself to the habits and humours of his associates. But when the visits had all been paid, and the time came for him to settle down in an Aberdeen lodging, and live on oatmeal and inferior whisky in the society of a wife, who was perpetually upbraiding him for having reduced her in so short a time from affluence to penury, he lost his gaiety, and showed his victim the sternest and meanest qualities of his nature. With proper sentiments of pride and honour, Mrs. Byron was bent on living within the income of £150 a-year, still coming to her from the £3000 in the hands of trustees—the income that was now the only certain means of subsistence for herself, her husband, her child, and the

single servant, who whilst acting the part of nurse to the future poet, discharged also the duties of housemaid and cook. Captain Byron decided that, instead of filling himself with 'haggis,' he would at least dine daily as a gentleman of ancient descent and high fashion ought to dine. 'Supplies would soon be coming to him,' he said, 'from his kindred in the south, and his old friends in France; and in the mean time wine and meat must be bought for him on credit.' The altercations and noisier quarrels of such a husband and such a wife may be imagined. To escape from the woman who scolded him from morning till night, he withdrew from her lodging at one end of Queen Street and took a lodging for himself at the other end of the same thoroughfare. Money coming to him soon afterwards from the relative, who had already helped him so many times, the Captain withdrew for a while from Aberdeen, to the sorrow even more than to the material relief of the wife who, overflowing with animosity against him when he was at hand, could still love him passionately when he was out of her sight.

A few months later, in 1790, he reappeared in Aberdeen, to wheedle his wife out of a little money that would enable him to get away to France. But Catherine Gordon (though she eventually yielded to his importunity) told him roundly that she had not a penny in her pocket, and that even if she had fifty guineas in hand she would not give him one of them. Perhaps this answer seemed to him a hint that a *single* guinea might still be squeezed out of her. Anyhow the man actually had the meanness to write to her, imploring her to give him a guinea—a begging letter that came in the course of years to the poet, who, preserving it as a curious domestic record, could still think of the writer with tenderness. It is certain that Captain Byron was not wanting in affectionateness to the little boy, who on one occasion shared his father's bed for a night. Whilst 'Mad Jack' and his wife were occupying separate lodgings in Queen Street, Aberdeen, he used to waylay the child and his nurse in their daily walks, so as to have the pleasure of playing with the little fellow. The poet's memory was very retentive of kindnesses rendered to him in childhood; and though imagination had doubtless much to do with his affectionate recollections of his father, there is no reason to think them *mere* fancies. 'I was not so young,' Byron said towards the end of his life, 'when my father died, but that I perfectly remember him.'

The poet, however, cannot have been more than three years old when he saw his father for the last time; for Captain Byron withdrew from Aberdeen at least as early as the first month of 1791, on obtaining the means—partly from his wife and partly



from Mrs. Leigh—to fly to France beyond the reach of his creditors. A few months later he died at Valenciennes in his thirty-sixth year, soon after his execution of a will, by which he appointed his sister, Mrs. Leigh, his sole executrix, the property affected by the instrument being a legacy of one hundred pounds from Admiral Byron's estate, and the testator's vested share of certain money, that on his mother's death would pass to her children or their representatives. It is needless to observe that this trifling property was insufficient for the payment of Mad Jack's debts.

Conflicting accounts have been given of his death; one of them being that he died by his own hand, a statement that at least accords with the man's character and the desperate circumstances to which he brought himself by numerous acts of imprudence. To Harness, Byron more than once asserted that 'his father was insane, and killed himself;' but on coming to grounds for attributing the death to natural causes, Harness came to the astounding conclusion that the poet in so speaking said what he knew to be untrue, and in a mere freak of morbid humour 'calumniated the blood flowing in his veins.' The information which caused Harness to take this view of his friend's behaviour came to him, doubtless, directly or indirectly, from those members of the Byron family who were of opinion that Captain Byron died, as the phrase goes, 'in his bed,' and in the ordinary course of nature. Even if Byron told a wilful untruth in this matter, it is extravagant to charge him with thereby 'calumniating the blood in his own veins;' for some of the most amiable and altogether virtuous persons have gone mad and killed themselves. The gloomy misadventure may occur to-morrow to the wisest and mildest and best of living men. Byron's statement, true or untrue, was nothing more than a statement that his father died in a certain way, that is no more disgraceful than any other peculiarly mournful way of dying. But what is the evidence that the statement was discordant with fact? At the most, it can have been nothing more than the strong and reasonable opinion of certain persons that Captain Byron did *not* die by his own act.

But the strongest evidence on such a matter is sometimes illusory, and the reasonable conclusion from it erroneous. Many a man has committed suicide in such a manner, that he has expired in his bed, and that his death has been assigned sincerely to natural causes by his nearest kindred, and all the members of his household, ay, and by a coroner's jury specially appointed to ascertain the cause of death. Lastly, even if it could be shown that Captain Byron was not guilty of suicide, why should Byron

be accused of falsehood in the matter? The poet of strong, at times morbidly strong, imagination, after long brooding over his father's melancholy story may well have come to a wrong conclusion about his death, and having once accepted the ghastly fancy for such fact, may have sincerely believed what he certainly said to Harness. The man, who was known throughout life as 'Mad Jack Byron,' may be presumed to have been a person whose eccentricity bordered upon insanity. This man of vehement feelings had fallen to a condition in which men of strong passions and unsettled faith are apt to meditate on self-murder as a means of escape from their humiliations and exasperating troubles. Going abroad with a few guineas in his purse—just enough money to keep him for a few weeks—he died in his thirty-sixth year. That he killed himself in despair was no unnatural opinion for his son to entertain long afterwards. It is a melancholy example of the injustice dealt out to Byron during his life and after his death, alike by his friends and his foes, that so amiable and worthy a gentleman as Harness could attribute falsehood to his friend, because his account of his father's way of dying was contradicted by persons who seemed to know the real truth of the matter. Surely Harness might have been content to charge his friend with nothing worse than mere morbid misconception, and to pity him for the sorrow that came to him from so dismal a fancy. It never seems to have occurred to Harness that, as the chief of his house, Byron might have had surer and fuller information about this doleful business than all the members of his family. On the open question, whether 'Mad Jack Byron' died by his own hand, no opinion is here offered. At this distance from the event, the question is of no great moment to readers. But a very strong opinion is given that the poet did not utter those words to Harness in mere levity and wickedness, and that one of the causes of the melancholy that ever followed his joyous moods like a shadow was a conviction that the father, whom he recalled lovingly and pitied profoundly, killed himself to get away from his misery.

On receiving the news of her husband's death at Valenciennes, Catherine Gordon's grief vented itself in screams that were audible to her neighbours in the same street. The poor woman had small cause to weep for the event that stirred her to so characteristic a display of strong emotion. For *her*, at least, it was well that the libertine, who had wasted her wealth, and with cruel words had whipt her into many a fit of fury, could never again approach her. Even though he had lived to put a coronet on her head, she would have had small reason to thank God for so bad a husband. It was also well for the little

boy, already observant and clever enough to think it strange his mother should be so wildly wretched for the death of the man whom she had so often upbraided in his hearing for being a prodigy of masculine wickedness.

Byron was a school-boy, stricken with illness from which he did not expect to recover, when in one of the most interesting and thoughtful of his youthful poems, he wrote the familiar lines—so touchingly prophetic of the troubles that were soon to come upon him through the want of wise parental control,—

'Stern death forbade my orphan youth to share  
The tender guidance of a father's care.  
Can rank, or e'en a guardian's name, supply  
The love which glistens in a father's eye?  
For this can wealth or title's sound atone,  
Made by a parent's early loss, my own?'

He had endured what these early lines predicted, and was fast moving onwards to the rocks that wrecked him, when in more strenuous verse but in the same strain of feeling, he wrote,—

'The chief of Lara is return'd again :  
And why had Lara cross'd the bounding main?  
Left by his sire, too young such loss to know,  
Lord of himself ;—that heritage of woe,  
That fearful empire which the human breast  
But holds to rob the heart within of rest!—  
With none to check, and few to point in time  
The thousand paths that slope the way to crime ;  
Then, when he most required commandment, then  
Had Lara's daring boyhood govern'd men.  
It skills not, boots not step by step to trace  
His youth through all the mazes of its race ;  
Short was the course his restlessness had run,  
But long enough to leave him half undone.'

To those who have learnt from the admitted facts of his youth and earlier manhood, how gentle, affectionate, and manageable a creature Byron was at life's outset ; how quick to respond to kindness, and render homage to those whom he respected ; how ready to profit by sympathetic admonition, and sacrifice his self-love to his sense of right ; how full of loyalty to all who had a moral title to his allegiance ; and how devoid of even a leaven of vicious wilfulness,—it appears, at least, more than probable that had he been watched and guarded, from his sixteenth to his twenty-sixth year, by a proud, sagacious, and loving father, he would have been saved from the catastrophe, in which he lost his domestic happiness, and everything that was really dear to him, with the exception of his sister's love, a few friendships, the fame that could not be



taken from him, and the genius that was destined to make him still more famous.—But under no conceivable circumstances could ‘Mad Jack Byron’ have sobered down, and mellowed and ripened into such a father.

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## CHAPTER V.

### ABERDEEN.

The Widow's Poverty—The Poet's Childhood—May Gray's Calvinism—Catherine Gordon's Treatment of her Boy—His Scotch Tutors—His Lameness—Banks of Dee—Heir Presumptive—Aberdeen Grammar School—The Fifth Lord's Death—Byron's First Love: Mary Duff—His Temper in Childhood—His Girlishness—‘Auld Lang Syne.’

DURING her residence in Aberdeen, from an early day of 1790 to the end of the summer of 1798, Mrs. Byron had three different places of abode;—the first in Queen Street, the second in Virginia Street, and the third in Broad Street. In the two first-named streets she had small furnished lodgings, but on moving to Broad Street she took an ‘entire floor,’ which she fitted with the furniture that on her migration to England was sold (with the exception of the plate and linen) for 74*l.* 17*s.* 7*d.*

What with her inexperience in the arts by which a little money may be made to go a long way, and what with the consequences of ‘the Captain's wicked extravagance,’ which so often stirred her to equally reasonable and unreasonable outpourings of indignation, Mrs. Byron found it impossible at first to live within her narrow income of 150*l.* a-year. At the time of the Captain's second visit to Aberdeen she was in debt at least to the amount of 100*l.* And creditors had put ‘arrestments’ on her modest revenue, when in the first quarter of 1791, she felt it incumbent on her honour to promise certain of the Aberdeen tradesmen, that she would herself pay those several little bills which the Captain, of course from pure forgetfulness, had omitted to settle on the eve of his withdrawal from the city. But when she had taken heart to borrow 300*l.* at 5 per cent., in order to wipe off all claims on her estate and sense of dignity, and to pay the charges of needful furniture for her Broad Street ‘flat’—a financial re-arrangement that reduced her yearly revenue by 15*l.*—she passed to a more tranquil period of her monetary experiences.

On the death of her grandmother, the income, accruing to the heiress of Gight from the fund in the hands of her trustees, rose from 135*l.* to 190*l.* per annum; but as the aged annuitant survived the date of her granddaughter's migration from Scotland to Nottinghamshire, Catherine Gordon Byron's whole yearly income at Aberdeen never exceeded 135*l.*, after the re-arrangement of her affairs. On that narrow revenue, however, she contrived to pay her way, and at the same time lay-by enough for those unforeseen occurrences that are so likely to prevent the ends of a small income from meeting. When George suffered from measles in 1792, there may not have been money in hand for medicine and subsequent change of air; but in 1796, on his convalescence from scarlet fever, Mrs. Byron had no occasion to debate with much anxious casting of accounts, whether she could afford to carry him forty miles up the Dee to that pleasant farmhouse at Ballatrech (near Ballater), where he would breathe the purest air in all Scotland. It should be borne in mind that a guinea in George the Third's time had a much greater buying power than twenty-one Victorian shillings.

Whilst Catherine Gordon, who preferred her maiden surname to the one she had acquired by marriage, was graduating in the arts of domestic economy, and seizing every occasion for impressing on her boy how vastly superior the Gordons of her branch were to the Gordons of any other branch, and how immeasurably inferior English Byrons (albeit of a noble race) were to every variety of the Scotch Gordons, she maintained a correspondence with the child's London aunt (Mrs. Leigh, of 39 Brompton Row, Knightsbridge), who seems to have taken a womanly interest in the 'little boy at Aberdeen,' and from her heart to have compassionated her sister-in-law. The sisters may not have had many subjects in common, or much to tell one another. But to the widow a letter from England must have been welcome, if it caused her to think of the lordly Abbey her boy might some day inherit. Perhaps the ladies were the better friends for the distance between them. As fellow-tourists in France they would soon have fallen out. For whilst Mrs. Leigh pitied '*that poor French king,*' and wept her eyes red over Marie Antoinette's troubles, Catherine Gordon Byron was on the side of '*the people,*' whose sufferings in her opinion fully justified the strong measures they were taking to '*crush out the tyrants.*' Whatever else may be said against her, it cannot be denied that Mrs. Byron had just then the courage of her opinions. Declining to be called Whig or liberal, or by any other milk-and-water name, she avowed herself '*a democrat,*' and in the very

ears of Aberdeen Tories prayed for the time, when kings and all oppressors would be called to account and punished according to their deserts. Whilst little George was instructed in theology by Mary, shortened affectionately to 'May' Gray (his pious Scotch nurse, the sister and successor of his first nurse), he was taught by his mother to abhor tyrants and regard the poor as extremely ill-used people, who would be as prosperous and virtuous as any philanthropist could wish them to be, if despots would but leave them alone. The child, who from the one teacher learnt to fear God, was inspired by the other with distrust of kings and a romantic concern for 'the people.' May Gray was the better teacher, but the mother also had a share in the formation of the child's character.

The nurse taught the child his first prayers; and before he could read, he learnt from her lips to repeat passages of the Sacred Scriptures; the first and the twenty-third Psalm being amongst the selections from the Bible, which were thus planted in his memory in his earliest infancy. And when one recalls how, in later time, he not seldom listened to the counsel of the ungodly, and stood in the way of sinners, and sat in the seat of the scornful, it is pitiful to think of the little fellow repeating the first Psalm to his attendant ere he bade her 'good-night' and laid his curly pate on the pillow. At this tender age, the nervous child accepted with the trustfulness of infancy all the nurse's Calvinistic views on matters of religion. It is more than probable that, had it not been for May Gray's enduring influence on her pupil, Shelley would not have had occasion to extend his arms towards his wife in a way expressive of astonishment mingled with sorrow, and shriek excitedly, 'By what he said last night in talking over his "Cain," the best of all his undramatic dramas, I do believe, Mary—I do believe, Mary, that he is little better than a Christian!'

Whilst the Scotch servant, with her strong Calvinism and narrow intellect, was thus mindful for the spiritual welfare of her 'charge,' Mrs. Byron was no less watchful over his morals and deportment. A more exasperating and injurious ruler for a sensitive and sometimes violently passionate child, cannot be imagined than this vehement and undisciplined woman, who fell daily into as many fits of ill-temper as there are hours in the day, and rarely passed a week without a wild outbreak of hysterical rage. Abundantly lavish of kisses to the child when he was in her good graces, she was no less lavish of blows when he incurred her capricious displeasure. Now covering him with caresses, and now seizing him to give him a beating, she was no



mother for such a child to love,—but an equally perplexing and appalling fact for him to study, ponder over, and dread. In a later stage of his infancy, instead of fearing her, he hated and ridiculed her. At least, on one occasion, after pouring half-a-hundred abusive epithets upon him, and even swearing at him, she mocked this issue of her own body for being ‘a lame brat!’ At this unnatural gibe a fearful light came from the child’s eyes,—the light that so often flashed from them in the coming time. The boy’s visible emotion was not lost upon the mother, who probably expected it to be followed by words no less violent than her own. But the child surpassed the mother in self-control. For half-a-minute, whilst his lips quivered and his face whitened from the force of feeling never to be forgotten, he was silent; and then he spoke five short words, and no more. ‘I was born so, mother!’ he said slowly, before he turned away from the woman who dared not follow him. The words were in the poet’s mind when, in his early manhood, he told the Marquis of Sligo the several reasons that made it impossible for him to feel towards Mrs. Byron as a son ought to feel for a widowed mother. The scene, which ended with these words, came to his mind on his return from Greece (where he had taken the young Marquis into his confidence), when the intelligence came to him of Mrs. Byron’s death. At Pisa, just three years before his death, the scene was in his mind when he wrote the first words of ‘The Deformed Transformed:’—

*Bertha.* Out, hunchback!

*Arnold.*

I was born so, mother!’

Whilst receiving lessons in religion from May Gray and lessons in demeanour from Mrs. Byron, the boy acquired the rudiments of other knowledge from one or another of the three pedagogues who successively directed his studies before he was sent to the Aberdeen Grammar School in 1794, and for each of whom he had a kindly word, when in his twenty-sixth year he put on paper his recollections of his childhood in Scotland; the first of the preceptors being Mr. Bowers, whose pupils (of both sexes) were pleased to christen him ‘Bodsy,’ in reference to his dapperness. Having, for the modest fee of one guinea, spent a year (from November 1792 to November 1793) under the tuition of Bodsy Bowers, whose method of imparting knowledge did not save his pupil from having his ears boxed in Broad Street for knowing just nothing, the boy was placed under the charge of Mr. Ross, the ‘very devout, clever little clergyman,’ whose ‘mild manners and good-natured painstaking’ rose years afterwards to the poet’s grateful memory; when standing on the heights of Tusculum,

he looked 'down upon the little round lake that was once Regillus,' and recalled how his imagination had in childhood been taken by the story of the Battle of Regillus. As he 'made astonishing progress' under the good minister's care, and had a strong liking for his master, he should not have been removed from so excellent a teacher, and placed under the strictly limited authority of the 'very serious, saturnine, but kind young man, named Paterson,' who was a rigid Presbyterian, and the son of his pupil's shoemaker. It is not, however, surprising that he was taken from so worthy and efficient a preceptor as Mr. Ross; for the boy's tutors never pleased Mrs. Byron, who was at all times quick to hold them accountable for his faults of demeanour, and more particularly for his obvious want of affection for herself.

In perusing the biographies of the poet, alike in the pages that refer to his earlier time and those that relate to the successive periods of his manhood, readers should be mindful of what has been said in this volume of his lameness, or they will be misled by the passages which speak of his excursions up the Dee and his 'solitary rambles,' as though he were a fairly good pedestrian. 'In early life,' says Trelawny, a sensible writer and the best authority on this subject, 'whilst his frame was light and elastic, with the aid of a stick, he might have tottered along for a mile or two; but after he had waxed heavier, he seldom attempted to walk more than a few hundred yards, without squatting down or leaning against the first wall, bank, rock, or tree at hand, never sitting on the ground, as it would have been difficult for him to get up again.' Fashioned for strength in his neck, shoulders, and arms, he could at Aberdeen and afterwards at Harrow acquit himself well enough in a pugilistic combat, so long as he could hop and spring about on his toes, but in a long fight he was sure to be worsted, through the weakness of his feet. Fierce and resolute as any of his successive bull-dogs, he won several fights at Harrow, but in every case he won them by rushing at his adversary with the *élan* of a French foot-soldier, and making a short business of each round by putting in quickly two or three blows with his singularly muscular arms. When he could not snatch success in this manner he was beaten, and had to bide his time for another opportunity of 'paying off' an enemy, as he paid off his schoolmate at Aberdeen on the occasion mentioned by Moore. In later time he boxed with Jackson (the famous pugilist) and Jackson's pupils in the same manner. During his brief and brilliant career in London, it was noticed by his friends that to hide his lameness, he always entered a room quickly, running rather than walking, and stopt himself



suddenly by planting his left (the comparatively sound) foot on the ground, and resting upon it. On the rare occasions when he was seen walking in the streets, it was observed that he moved with a peculiar sliding gait rather than the easy lounge of a fashionable saunterer,—in fact, with the gait of a person walking on the balls and toes of his feet, and doing his best to hide the singular mode of progression. Passages may, indeed, be found in his diaries and letters, that do not accord with this account of his pedestrianism. But they must be regarded as the venial misrepresentations of a writer who wished to divert attention, even his own attention, from the infirmity respecting which he was acutely sensitive. Just as the blind sometimes talk about ‘seeing things,’ and even go to picture galleries to ‘look at’ works of art, the lame are often heard to talk vauntingly of their achievements in walking. It was so with Byron. Rather than reveal his infirmity, he would endure serious discomfort. When the sudden shower of rain fell upon the prison garden (*vide* Hunt’s ‘Lord Byron and his Contemporaries,’ vol. i. p. 298), Byron could have run in his peculiar way for the length of the enclosure, as fast as Moore who had left him in the wet; but as he could not run without revealing his infirmity to a person, whom he thought ignorant of it, he continued to move slowly to cover, at the risk of getting wet through.

Suffering from his lameness in childhood and youth, no less than he suffered from it in his earlier manhood, the Aberdeen ‘laddie’ was, of course, incapable of taking the amount of exercise on foot that is usual with children of his age. His excursions on the banks of the Dee, and other rambles, were made with the help of a pony, whether he went by himself or with a playmate. His days were nearing the end when, in a note to one of the brightest and heartiest passages of ‘Don Juan,’ he recorded his clear recollection of ‘Balgounie’s brig’s black wall,’ and of the fear that thrilled his nerves lest in crossing the river on the back of his pony, he (an only son) should fulfil the prediction of the terrifying lines:—

‘Brig o’ Balgounie, wight is thy wa’;  
Wi’ a wife’s ae son on a mare’s ae foal,  
Down shalt thou fa’.’

There is also a sufficiently attested story that, on approaching the same bridge with a companion (another only son), whose ‘turn’ at ‘riding and tying’ had placed him in the saddle, little George Byron insisted on remounting the pony and riding to the other side of the stream, whilst his friend waited behind to see the result of so hazardous an experiment; the argument by which



the future poet carried his point being that, whereas he had only one parent to mourn for his death, his friend had both father and mother to weep and wail, should their boy be killed from the falling of the bridge. If it should be proved to be as fictitious as biographical anecdotes are sometimes found on critical examination, this story would still accord with the way in which the 'little boy at Aberdeen' made excursions in the neighbourhood of the city, and brought himself face to face with the picturesqueness of more northern scenes. It was well for the youthful poet to sing in the 'Hours of Idleness,'—

'I would I were a careless child,  
Still dwelling in my Highland cave,  
Or roaming through the dusky wild,  
Or bounding o'er the dark blue wave.'

Even when she plays the part of her own autobiographer, Poetry is permitted to be inaccurate in details. The 'careless child' roamed 'through the dusky wild' on the back of a Shetland pony, and was no more accustomed to foot it about the Highlands than to 'dwell in a cave.'

If it were safe to trust the biographer (Dallas), who, notwithstanding his connection with the Byrons, certainly was in error as to the poet's birth-place, and even wrote about his 'fine black hair,' it would be recorded on this page that the boy, whilst living at Aberdeen, acquired the elements of French—a language he never spoke or wrote with correctness or facility—at Monsieur De Loyauté's Academy.

In 1794, the year in which her son entered the Aberdeen Grammar School, Mrs. Catherine Gordon Byron had reason to think her husband's family paid her less attention than she might fairly expect from them. That Mrs. Leigh, who had been her helpful friend in several emergencies, allowed several months to pass without writing to inquire for her nephew, was a circumstance that troubled Mrs. Byron not a little, and filled her with suspicion that enemies had intercepted the letters to her which General Leigh's wife, now living at Sandgate, near Folkestone, might be presumed to have written and sent up, in packets of similar notes, to London, whence they could be 'franked on' to Scotland. No coldness to account for Mrs. Leigh's silence seems to have risen at this time between the ladies, though they differed twelve months later on questions touching Mad Jack's will and estate. This silence was the more remarkable and vexatious to Mrs. Byron, because it not only prevented her from having the pleasure of surprising her neighbours with a most exciting piece of intelligence, but also exposed her to the humiliation of being indebted to some

one of them for the information which should have been sent promptly to her from Nottinghamshire or London, and of course would have been so sent to her, had the Byrons made much account of 'the little boy at Aberdeen' and his mother.

The fifth Lord Byron's grandson had died in Corsica, and weeks had passed since his kindred in England donned mourning for him, before Mrs. Byron of Aberdeen knew of the event, which put her little boy next in succession to Newstead and the barony; and when the intelligence reached her, it came in a manner that declared to all Aberdeen how little she was esteemed by her husband's people. For the news, which should have been sent promptly from Newstead, she was indebted to the gossip of a neighbour. If she received the astounding intelligence at a tea-party, it is not difficult to imagine the resentment and humiliation that qualified her delight, when an eager demand for her informant's authority for the staggering announcement provoked expressions of lively astonishment at her ignorance of a matter, that had been known for more than a month to every one else. Such an incident could not fail to ruffle the always emotional lady.

But if the way by which it came to her was galling, the intelligence was very gratifying to her pride. It was so good that, to guard herself from bitter disappointment, she tried not to believe it, till she should receive confirmatory letters from the South, putting it beyond question that her boy had really and truly become his great-uncle's heir-presumptive. On learning in due course that the talker at the tea-party had spoken no more than the truth, poor Mrs. Byron began to chatter about leaving Aberdeen, and withdrawing George from the Grammar School which, though a most respectable seminary and quite good enough for the sons of mere lairds and writers to the signet, was no fit place for a young gentleman who a few years hence would be a lord of the Upper House.

The news, of course, raised Mrs. Byron considerably in the regard of her neighbours in Aberdeen, and revived the waning affection of her kindred throughout the county. Persons who for years had thought lightly of the ruined heiress, and declared her temper insufferable, now discovered in her good qualities, for which no one had heretofore commended her. Cousins, who had neglected her ever since her husband's death, now sent her pressing invitations to visit them, and bring her boy with her. Mr. Ferguson, a leading gentleman of affairs in Aberdeen, who had stood staunchly by her in her darkest hour, was of opinion that Lord Byron might, by judicious treatment, be induced to make her an allowance, or at least to pay for the education of



his heir at one of the great public schools. Mr. Ferguson was also of opinion that if her case were submitted to the consideration of His Most Gracious Majesty by the Prime Minister, a pension of at least £300 a-year would be granted her on the Civil List. And this last matter was one on which Mr. Ferguson was the more justified in speaking strongly and hopefully, because he had himself been instrumental in procuring from the King's gracious benevolence a pension for a lady of quality, who like Mrs. Byron was suffering from straitened circumstances. Knowing the strings to be pulled and how to pull them, Mr. Ferguson would have much pleasure in acting for Mrs. Byron in the matter, *if* he could only have Lord Byron's written authority to bestir himself for the accomplishment of his desire. Without authority from the chief of the Byron family, it was obvious that Mr. Ferguson could not move effectually or safely in the lady's behalf. Lord Byron was known to be a person of a singular temper; and it was conceivable that he might denounce for a meddler any person who, without his sanction, should venture to submit a statement of Mrs. Byron's necessities to the minister who at that time enjoyed the sovereign's confidence. The lady was therefore urged to put herself in communication with Lord Byron on the subject. If she did not like to write to his lordship at once, it was suggested by her discreet counsellor that she should consult Mrs. Leigh, who was believed to enjoy her uncle's favour, and through her get access to the Lord of Newstead.

Whether the 'wicked Lord Byron' was ever applied to on the subject, there is no evidence. Possibly Mrs. Leigh knew her uncle too well to trouble him with talk about Mrs. Byron and the 'little boy at Aberdeen.' Anyhow his lordship contributed nothing to the widow's means, and never authorized Mr. Ferguson to pull official strings. Instead of offering to send his heir to Eton or Harrow, the eccentric nobleman made the illegal sale of Rochdale property, which resulted in the long and costly lawsuit that was one cause of the poet's financial embarrassments in the earlier stages of his career, after coming of age. This lawsuit was the principal legacy for which the author of 'Childe Harold' had to remember his great-uncle.

In default of the requisite sanction, Mr. Ferguson took no steps to introduce the widow to the King's benevolent consideration; but five years later, when her son had become Lord Byron, on the death of his great-uncle (who died on the 19th of May, 1798), Catherine Gordon Byron obtained the long-desired pension of £300 a-year on the Civil List;—an exhibition of royal benignity, that placed the democratic lady in sufficiently



easy circumstances, and perhaps caused her to be more cautious in declaring her disapproval of kings.

At the Aberdeen Grammar School, Byron 'threaded all the classes to the fourth,' as he himself states the case in one of his autobiographical journals. But in thus rising from the place appropriate to the 'little fellow' of the school to the place where a boy in his eleventh year would be looked for as a matter of course, he displayed neither aptitude nor liking for his lessons. Sometimes indeed he was at the top of his class, but on those occasions the top, as an Irishman might say, was the bottom. To pique the ambition of the superior scholars to recover the places which they had lost without disgrace, and to spur the less apt scholars to retain the dignity they had not won, it was the practice of the masters of the school to invert the order of their classes, so that for a moment the knowing boys were placed lower than the ignorant ones. On these occasions Byron, after walking from the bottom to the top of his form, more than once heard his master say in a bantering tone, 'And now, George, man, let me see how soon you'll be at the foot.' The judgment of the masters about him was the judgment that has been accorded by pedagogues to so many children, who have distinguished themselves honourably in later time:—'Quick enough, but wanting in application!'

Whilst he neglected his lessons, the lame boy, though scarcely to be described as studious, was a reader of books (seldom perused by lads of his age), when his mates were at leap-frog. On the margin of a leaf of the elder D'Israeli's 'Essay on the Literary Character,' Byron in his mature age made this memorandum respecting the authors he had read before leaving Aberdeen:—'Knolles, Cantemir, De Tott, Lady W. M. Montague, Hawkins's translation from Mignet's "History of the Turks," the "Arabian Nights"—all travels or histories, or books upon the East, I could meet with, I had read, as well as Ricaut, before I *was ten years old*.' And in connection with this account of the desultory studies of his earlier years, it should be remembered how much evidence is afforded by his writings, that his memory was strongly retentive of the matters picked up from books perused in his infancy. Dr. Moore's 'Zeluco' (1789)—a novel in which he delighted in his Aberdeen time—gave the poet his first conception of 'Childe Harold.' All that is most pathetic in the incomparably beautiful account of the 'two fathers in this ghastly crew,' in the Second Canto of 'Don Juan,' is referable to the impression made upon him by the 'Narrative of the Shipwreck of the "Juno" on the coast of Arracan, in the year 1795,' which he read with quickened pulse

and tearful eyes in the year following his withdrawal from Scotland in 1798. In the whole range of literature, one would look in vain for a genius of the highest order, whose mind was more notably influenced throughout life by the food on which it fed in the earliest period of its development.

At Aberdeen, also, Byron received his first lesson from the greatest and most ennobling of human teachers. One may smile for a moment at the thought of so young a child's first passion for a companion of the opposite sex. But no one who remembers Dante's passion for Beatrice (a love that warmed him in his tenth year), and Canova's quickness to fall in love at a much earlier age, will regard as 'mere child's play' the sentiment with which the boy of meditative moods and almost morbid sensibility regarded Mary Duff—the little girl with dark-brown hair and hazel eyes, whose charm of face, and voice, and form, and manner, gave him many a sleepless night, when he was only nine years old. That he 'could neither feel *passion*, nor know the meaning of the word' at the time of this love's warmest fervour, Byron was certain when he recalled the affair and wrote about it in his twenty-sixth year; but for months together it was happiness to the shy boy to be allowed to gaze at this girl, to attend her in her walks, to sit by her side in the playroom of the old house hard by the Aberdeen Plain-stones, sometimes even to caress her. And all through the same months, it was misery to him to be away from her. Unutterably happy in her presence, he fretted and pined in her absence. This is not playing at love, but the passion itself, so far as a child, incapable of the peculiar desire to which perfect love owes so much of its colour and warmth, is capable of the sentiment. It is love, felt perhaps by one child of a hundred thousand, but quite unknown to the others. In Byron this sentiment was so enduring—or (to speak more precisely) so capable of being revived—that in his seventeenth year he experienced an hysterical agitation, that nearly occasioned him one of those convulsive seizures to which he was liable throughout his life at moments of supreme emotion, on learning suddenly that his 'old flame' was well and happily married to a gentleman of ancient name and lineage, who was at that time making his way in Edinburgh as a wine merchant.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> As the wife of Robert Cockburn (son of Baron Cockburn and younger brother of Henry Lord Cockburn) Mary Duff missed the celebrity that would have pertained to her, had Byron married his first love, but she enjoyed domestic felicity seldom accorded to the wives of famous poets. A man of refinement and elegant pursuits, the familiar of Walter Scott and the delight of Sir Walter's peculiar 'set' of friends, Robert Cockburn of Edinburgh and London (the wine merchant whose port is still known



One of the poet's journals contains a passage which shows that though he could recall his own childhood, he was imperfectly acquainted with the nature of ordinary children. After describing his infantile devotion to little Mary Duff, he writes in his twenty-sixth year, 'In all other respects, I differed not at all from other children, being neither tall nor short, dull nor witty, of my age, but rather lively—except in my sullen moods, and then I was always a devil. They once (in one of my silent rages) wrenched a knife from me, which I had snatched from table at Mrs. B.'s dinner (I always dined earlier), and applied to my breast . . . just before the late Lord B.'s decease.' The 'rages,' that Byron regarded as peculiar to himself in his childhood, are not unusual in young people; and there was nothing very remarkable about the ways in which he displayed his occasional passionateness. It is not surprising that the child, whose mother often vented her fury in his presence by destroying pieces of her wearing-apparel, should in one of his earliest fits of fury have torn his new frock to shreds: and the behaviour of a ten-years-old boy, in seizing a knife under a sudden impulse of wrath and threatening to kill himself, was less extraordinary than the autobiographer imagined. On the other hand, it is certain that, apart from amatory precociousness, little George Byron differed from the majority of children in several respects. Especially he differed from them in retentiveness of memory and in intellectual receptivity. The knowledge, largely qualified with error as childish knowledge must ever be, that came to him in his infancy, passed into his soul and never left it. When it is remembered how needful for their happiness it is that persons who feel acutely should be capable of forgetting their annoyances, Byron's retentiveness of memory may be described as terrible. He differed also from the majority of young people in the delicacy of his sensibilities, and also in his morbid shyness, that far exceeding the shyness of proud children, exposed to mortifying circumstances.

A story is told of his behaviour in his eleventh year, which is noteworthy for its evidence that the bashfulness from which he suffered at this time and for several subsequent years,—indeed, in some degree throughout life,—was less the weakness of a

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by his name), possessed every endowment for winning and holding the love of a sensitive and singularly beautiful woman: and I have good authority for saying that, from the hour of her marriage, Mary Duff had harmonious days in the brightest sunshine of romance. The *faux pas*, alluded to in one of Byron's diaries as having been committed by Mary Duff's mother, was nothing worse than her (second) marriage to a worthy man of social quality inferior to her own.



sheepish boy than of a timid girl. On being required for the first time to answer to his name in the school roll-call by the title of 'Dominus,' a robust boy would have answered 'Adsum' in a clear voice, and would have replied to the astonishment visible in the countenances of his school-fellows, by looking them proudly in the face, whilst his own glowed with excitement. But Byron was unequal to the ordeal, that certainly would not have tried severely the self-possession of an ordinary child of his age. Overcome by the novelty of the position and the gaze of his staring class-mates, he stood silent and fell into tears. The girlishness of his emotion on this occasion was characteristic of the boy,—whom Hobhouse in later time used to regard as a wayward and irresistibly charming woman, rather than as man, and whose sister to the last used to call him her dear 'baby Byron.'

Notwithstanding the pain that came to him from his mother's capricious harshness and violence, from incidents vexatious to his pride, from the terror begotten in his strongly imaginative mind by May Gray's calvinistic concern for his spiritual interests, and from the feminine sensitiveness of his highly nervous temperament, it is, however, certain that Byron's childhood was not upon the whole chiefly remarkable for its unhappiness. In many respects the circumstances of his infancy were unquestionably favourable to the health of his peculiar bodily constitution, the formation of his character, and the development of his genius,—or rather, let it be said, to the development of those germs of feeling and faculty that were destined to result in his genius. It was well for the nerves of the delicate boy that in his earlier childhood he breathed the bracing air of his mother's native county. It was well in later time for the poet, who was a peer and (without being so foolish about it as his biographers have asserted) prided himself none too little on his rank, that without having been subjected to the dwarfing and embittering conditions of extreme penury, he could recall a period when he lived in the ways that lie between affluence and poverty. It was well for the aristocrat to have been reared amongst the people, and to have learnt from personal experience how closely humble folk resemble the children of luxury and grandeur. If it abounded with trials to his pride and with incidents peculiarly afflicting to his sensitive and impetuously affectionate nature, his childhood afforded him pleasures which he remembered no less vividly than its vexations. When his days were speeding onward to 'the yellow leaf,' the man, who had drained a bitter cup to the dregs, could still write cheerily and tenderly,—

‘As auld Lang Syne brings Scotland, one and all,  
 Scotch plaids, Scotch snoods, the blue hills and clear streams,  
 The Dee, the Don, Balgounie’s brig’s black wall,  
 All my boy’s feelings, all my gentler dreams  
 Of what I *then dreamt*, clothed in their own pall,  
 Like Banquo’s offspring;—floating past me seems  
 My childhood in this childishness of mine:  
 I care not—’tis a glimpse of “Auld Lang Syne.”’

The heart’s music rings out too unmistakably in these lines for any one to question their sincerity. It matters not that he had often spoken of Scotland and her people in a different strain. When the great Jeffrey with his review tried to crush him, the young poet wrote savage things of the critic and his clique; and in later times he visited Scotland with his wrath because a few of her writers were worrying him. When the saucy girl twitted him with the Scotch note, that was faintly perceptible at times in his musical voice, he could say pettishly, ‘I would rather hear that the country was sunk in the sea than believe you to be right.’ People could in his careless moods amuse him by ridiculing Scotland, and he would take part in the banter, but only with the playful malice which a humourist reserves for his best friends, and delights to pour upon them *because* they are his best friends. In his heart he loved ‘the land of the mountain and the flood,’ and was grateful to her for the childhood that, without being an altogether joyful one, had left him with many a joyful memory.

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## CHAPTER VI.

### NOTTINGHAM AND LONDON.

The Sixth Lord—His First Visit to Newstead—The Abbey—Tutor at Nottingham—Lavender, the Bone-setter—Dulwich Grove—Dr. Glenzie—A Very Troublesome Mamma—Guardian and Ward—Byron’s First Dash into Poetry—His Second Love; Margaret Parker—His Later Attachments—His Sensibility, Memory, and Imagination—Malvern Hills and Scotch Mountains.

IN language suitable for his purpose Moore tells how in the summer of 1798 Lord Byron ‘left Scotland with his mother and nurse, to take possession of the seat of his ancestors,’ and how on their arrival at the Newstead toll-bar ‘they saw the woods of the Abbey stretching out to receive them;’ when Mrs. Byron, feigning ignorance, asked the woman of the toll-

house to whom the Abbey belonged. On being informed that the late owner, Lord Byron, had died some time since, the proud mother inquired who was the late lord's heir:—a question that elicited the reply, 'They say, it is a little boy who lives at Aberdeen;' whereupon, May Gray, no longer able to control her feelings, ejaculated, 'And this is he: bless him!' at the same moment 'kissing with delight the young lord who was seated in her lap.' This pleasant story had probably a foundation of fact; but the sceptical reader will question whether the young lord—in the middle of his eleventh year, and a rather fleshy boy for his age—entered his ancestral domain sitting on the nurse's knees.

Modest truth would have been content to say that Mrs. Byron, with her son and maid-servant, travelled by stage-coaches to Nottingham; whence, on the day after their arrival at the town's best inn, they drove in a post-chaise to Newstead, to look at the place, which it was hoped the young lord would some day inhabit, after finishing his education, and marrying a lady with enough money to restore the ruinous mansion, and set the spits turning in its kitchens.

Though the woods extended their arms to receive the heir, the house was in no state for the entertainment of his mother. Had the house been tenantable, Mrs. Byron (not yet in possession of the Civil List pension, and with no other means than the small income on which she had lived at Aberdeen) was in no position to dwell in so grand a place. The young lord's estate (already in Chancery) was no property from which his mother could hope to get an allowance of three or four thousand a-year for the charges of his education at Eton or Harrow, and the maintenance of so stately a home for him during the holidays. The most being made of the rental, and the least of needful expenses, the few farms pertaining to the Abbey yielded a revenue of from £1200 to £1500 per annum. At Rochdale there was the property of which the late lord had made an illegal sale. To recover that property would be a work of time and expense; and on its recovery, should it ever be wrested from the people in possession, it might be worth some twenty thousand pounds. In the mean time, there was no fund for carrying on the law-suit, apart from the few hundreds a-year of the Newstead rental, that should not be needed for the young peer's education. The most valuable part of the boy's Newstead property was the part that yielded no income, beyond what the pasture of the park was let for, and moneys from the sale of timber. The entire property was valued by the land-agents at £90,000. A statelier and more picturesque place of its par-



ticular kind could scarcely be found in the midland shires ; and fortunately there was no entail to preclude the new lord from selling, as soon as he should come of age. But of course, so long as he should be a minor, all thought of sale would be out of the question.

It can be imagined how Mrs. Byron, daily growing stouter, waddled her way, under the guidance of an aged care-taker, through hall and corridor, through galleries and chambers, through neglected gardens and crumbling ruins, speaking querulous truth at every turn of the wicked old lord who had suffered so noble a place to fall into such dilapidation. It can be conceived how, long before the hour appointed for the repast, May Gray was sharply ordered to unpack a certain basket, which the excursionists from Nottingham had brought with them, unless she would see her mistress faint away for want of luncheon and a glass of sherry. It may be imagined how the young lord, heedless for the moment of his lameness and the pain of walking, slipped away from his mother to the eminence of the park that gave him the best view of the fair domain and venerable pile, whose beauties he described some twenty years later in his greatest poem :—

‘ An old, old monastery once, and now  
Still older mansion,—of a rich and rare  
Mix’d Gothic, such as artists all allow  
Few specimens yet left us can compare  
Withal : it lies perhaps a little low,  
Because the monks preferr’d a hill behind,  
To shelter their devotion from the wind.

‘ It stood embosom’d in a happy valley,  
Crown’d by high woodlands, where the Druid oak  
Stood like Caractacus, in act to rally  
His host, with broad arms ’gainst the thunderstroke ;  
And from beneath his boughs were seen to sally  
The dappled foresters—as day awoke,  
The branching stag swept down with all his herd,  
To quaff a brook which murmured like a bird

‘ Before the mansion lay a lucid lake,  
Broad as transparent, deep, and freshly fed  
By a river, which its softened way did take  
In currents through the calmer water spread  
Around : the wild fowl nestled in the brake  
And sedges, brooding in their liquid bed :  
The woods sloped downwards to its brink, and stood  
With their green faces fix’d upon the flood.

‘ Its outlet dash’d into a deep cascade,  
Sparkling with foam, until again subsiding,  
Its shriller echoes—like an infant made  
Quiet—sank into softer ripples, gliding

Into a rivulet ; and thus allay'd,

Pursued its course, now gleaming, and now hiding  
Its windings through the woods ; now clear, now blue,  
According as the skies their shadows threw.

' A glorious remnant of the Gothic pile

(While yet the church was Rome's) stood half apart  
In a grand arch, which once screen'd many an aisle.

These last had disappear'd—a loss to art :  
The first yet frown'd superbly o'er the soil,  
And kindled feelings in the roughest heart,  
Which mourn'd the power of time's or tempest's march,  
In gazing on that venerable arch.

' Within a niche, nigh to its pinnacle,

Twelve saints had once stood sanctified in stone ;  
But these had fallen, not when the friars fell,  
But in the war which struck Charles from his throne,  
When each house was a fortalice—as tell  
The annals of full many a line undone,—  
The gallant cavaliers, who fought in vain  
For those who knew not to resign or reign.

' But in a higher niche, alone, but crown'd,

The Virgin Mother of the God-born Child,  
With her Son in her blessed arms, look'd round ;  
Spared by some chance when all beside was spoil'd ;  
She made the earth below seem holy ground.

This may be superstition, weak or wild,  
But even the faintest relics of a shrine  
Of any worship wake some thoughts divine.

' A mighty window, hollow in the centre,

Shorn of its glass of thousand colourings,  
Through which the deepen'd glories once could enter,  
Streaming from off the sun like seraph's wings,  
Now yawns all desolate : now loud, now fainter,  
The gale sweeps through its fretwork, and oft sings  
The owl his anthem, where the silenced quire  
Lie with their hallelujahs quench'd like fire.

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' Amidst the court a Gothic fountain play'd,

Symmetrical, but deck'd with carvings quaint—  
Strange faces, like to men in masquerade,

And here perhaps a monster, there a saint :  
The spring gush'd through grim mouths of granite made,  
And sparkled into basins, where it spent  
Its little torrent in a thousand bubbles,  
Like man's vain glory, and his vainer troubles.

' The mansion's self was vast and venerable,

With more of the monastic than has been  
Elsewhere preserved : the cloisters still were stable,  
The cells, too, and refectory, I ween ;  
An exquisite small chapel had been able,  
Still unimpair'd, to decorate the scene ;  
The rest had been reform'd, replaced, or sunk,  
And spoke more of the baron than the monk.'

Taking charge of the young lord's estate, Chancery committed his person and education to the Earl of Carlisle, said by Moore to have been 'connected but remotely with' his ward's 'family.' A son of Isabella Byron,—scarcely less famous for eccentricity than her brother, the 'wicked lord,'—Lord Carlisle was first cousin (one degree removed) to the poet, who, had it not been for his mother, would probably have lived on pleasant enough terms with his guardian, instead of quarrelling with him bitterly.

Settling herself at Nottingham, where she resided for about twelve months, Mrs. Byron found a sufficient tutor for her son in Mr. Rogers, a worthy schoolmaster of the town, who without 'grounding' the boy in Latin, so as to prepare him for a public school, led him on to construe loosely certain parts of Virgil and Cicero. Of the lad's life at Nottingham little is known save that he conceived an affectionate regard for his tutor, suffered much at the hands of the bone-setter, Lavender, and was goaded by an old lady of Swan Green, one of his mother's gossips, into writing the four lines of puerile doggerel which have been noticed seriously by some of the poet's biographers as his earliest effort in satirical literature. On the bone-setter, for whom he conceived reasonable contempt and aversion, the boy is said to have played a childish trick, that from time immemorial has caused merriment in the nurseries of children. Arranging the letters of the alphabet in gibberish words, he asked his tormentor what the language was; when the pompous impostor declared the words Italian. A more characteristic and agreeable story is told of the sufferer's intercourse at this time with his teacher of Latin. 'It troubles me, my lord,' said the tutor, pausing in a lesson, 'to see you sitting there in such pain.' 'Never mind, Mr. Rogers,' was the answer; 'you shan't see any signs of it again.'

There is small need to describe the bone-setter's way of treating the foot. Blind to the nature of the case, the man did precisely as any other pretender of his kind would have done. He rubbed the foot with oil, twisted it about with violence, and fixed it tight in a wooden machine, constructed for 'screwing' and 'torturing' bone and muscle into better behaviour. Day after day this barbarous process was repeated; the result of the treatment, of course, being that the foot suffered more injury from bad art, than from unkind nature.

In the following year—when Mrs. Byron, on getting her pension, moved from Nottingham to London and took a house in Sloane Terrace—the patient was taken at Lord Carlisle's suggestion to Dr. Baillie, who of course saw at a glance the character of the mischief, for which surgery could do nothing



more than what John Hunter had prescribed years since. The foot having been provided with a shoe, made by an expert mechanician on the lines ordered by the famous surgeon, Dr. Baillie told the boy and his mother that it must be left to nature to overcome or modify the unfortunate consequences of hurtful treatment. The physician's counsel, that the comfort of the foot should be studied whilst nature was left to her own way of dealing with the distorted bones and injured tissues, was henceforth acted on, with a result that certainly justified the advice, though it scarcely fulfilled the doctor's moderate anticipation of amendment. On going to Harrow, Byron wore a shoe, that announced his infirmity to all observers of his costume; and he had been several years in England, before he could write to his first nurse (May Gray's sister) that he could wear an ordinary boot.

Mrs. Byron having moved from Nottingham to London, May Gray returned to Scotland, where she married a worthy man and died some three years after the death of the famous poet, in the formation of whose character she had been a considerable influence. On her departure for the North the boy, remarkable in later time for kindness to his servants, bade May Gray farewell with characteristic expressions of gratitude for her care of him during his long affliction; his parting gift to her being the first watch he ever possessed, the watch that after the nurse's death became the property of the kind doctor who attended her in her last illness. The boy had already given his nurse the little full-length portrait of himself 'standing with a bow and arrows in his hand, and a profusion of hair falling over his shoulders.' As her tide of life ebbed away, the loyal servant delighted in talking to the doctor of the great man, in the drama of whose history she is so characteristic an actor.

Whilst his foot was recovering from Lavender's mal-praxis, Byron was a pupil in the excellent preparatory school, kept by Dr. Glennie at Dulwich,—a preceptor whom the poet would have remembered no less affectionately than Mr. Ross of Aberdeen and Dr. Drury of Harrow, had it not been for misunderstandings arising from his mother's foolish behaviour. Finding the boy well acquainted with the historical parts of sacred scripture, Dr. Glennie was struck by the intelligence and earnestness with which he spoke on matters of religion. From the doctor's evidence on this subject it seems that Byron's acceptance of his nurse's doctrine can have been troubled by no sceptical considerations so long as she was his daily companion. There is indeed a story that, before he left Scotland, the boy had given his first nurse's husband cause to speak of him as 'a particularly

inquisitive child and puzzling about religion.' But this goes for nothing against the abundant evidence, that it was during his later time at Harrow or his earlier time at Cambridge, that Byron became a sceptic.

At the same time Dr. Glennie's attention was arrested by the boy's fondness for reading good literature: and at Dulwich Grove the lad had the means of indulging this taste; for sleeping in the doctor's library, he was encouraged to amuse himself with certain of its books, that comprised a set of the British poets from Chaucer to Churchill, which he was believed to have read from beginning to end. Whilst there is sufficient evidence that the schoolmaster, a gentleman of no ordinary culture and amiability, was abundantly considerate for his pupil's welfare and indulgent to his humours, it is on record to the doctor's honour that eighteen years later (in 1817, at Geneva) he had the courage and generosity to declare his disbelief of the stories with which society resounded to the poet's discredit. The more, therefore, is it to be regretted that no testimony can be produced of corresponding good-will on the poet's part. Byron's silence about Dulwich Grove, where he remained for two years, is significant. Had he remembered the meritorious master with kindness, there would certainly have been some exhibition of the feeling in his published journals and letters. On the other hand, had there been good reasons for his want of grateful regard for the preceptor, he would have put them on record. The fair inference is that, whilst he could not recall the doctor pleasantly, a sentiment of justice forbade him to write a word to his discredit.

The terms in which Dr. Glennie wrote to Moore of Mrs. Byron, whilst he had only the kindest words for her son, would of themselves show that Mrs. Byron was accountable for the disagreement of the master and pupil. 'Mrs. Byron,' he wrote with an asperity, that is the more remarkable, because the Scotchman would naturally have been lenient to the lady's northern peculiarities, had she not incensed him greatly, 'was a total stranger to English society and English manners; with an exterior far from pre-possessing, an understanding where nature had not been more bountiful, a mind wholly without cultivation, and the peculiarities of northern opinions, northern habits, and northern accent, I trust I do no prejudice to the memory of my countrywoman, if I say Mrs. Byron was not a Madame de Lambert, endowed with powers to retrieve the fortune and form the character and manners of a young nobleman, her son.' If these plain words expose the writer to a charge of something like a breach of professional confidence, it can be pleaded in his



behalf that he had endured extraordinary provocation from the lady, who treated him as contemptuously as it was in the nature of such a woman to treat a gentleman who was 'only her son's schoolmaster.'

Of course the disputes and conflicts, that arose between Dr. Glennie and Mrs. Byron, related to small matters; for the life of a school, more especially of a preparatory school for quite young gentlemen, is made of small matters. Complaining of the slowness of her boy's progress, Mrs. Byron acted as though her chief object was to make the progress slower. Instead of leaving George to his studies, she was continually driving over to Dulwich to take him out for the afternoon; to carry him off to a theatre or children's party. To the doctor's earlier and milder protests against these interruptions of his young friend's studies, Mrs. Byron answered with promises she failed to keep. But when the doctor became firmer and somewhat less conciliatory, the lady's brow clouded. There were scenes, in which the schoolmaster showed displeasure and the lady became angry;—followed by still stormier scenes that ended on Mrs. Byron's side with hysterics. Mrs. Glennie tried with her gentle voice to manage this ungente and exceedingly troublesome mamma. But Mrs. Glennie succeeded no better than her husband. Not once or twice alone, but repeatedly, the boy's guardian intervened between the belligerents, at the instance of the tutor, who of course knew the Earl would be on his side. By the Earl it was decided that Mrs. Byron's inconvenient visits to Dulwich Grove should cease, and that George's studies should not be interrupted during the six working days of every week. With due regard for the mother's feelings, and not a little to the schoolmaster's disappointment, it was, however, decided by Lord Carlisle that Mrs. Byron should receive a weekly visit from her son from the Saturday to Monday, on condition that he was sent back to school on Monday in time for lessons. When Mrs. Byron had shown her regard for this stipulation by keeping the boy with her till Monday afternoon, till the middle of the week, and even on one occasion for an entire week beyond the time appointed for his return to Dulwich, the Earl was again entreated to speak in the interest of tutor and pupil.

By this time Lord Carlisle's power over Mrs. Byron was at an end. The gentlewoman, whose insolent speech in the doctor's study and Mrs. Glennie's parlour had often been audible to the servants in the kitchen and the boys in the playground, was no gentlewoman to stand in awe of an earl. Of Lord Carlisle's last interview with Mrs. Byron nothing is known, save that he



left her presence with a determination to see as little as possible of her in the future. Confessing himself beaten by the virago, with whom he never again condescended to bandy words, the Earl said to Dr. Glennie, 'I can have nothing more to do with Mrs. Byron,—you must now manage her as you best can.' That the guardian had good cause for this resolve no one has questioned; and it is more than probable that he had reason for extending his displeasure to the boy, who, though he is not to be blamed for his mother's bad temper, might have done something to check and moderate its outbreaks. The boy may even have been guilty of impertinence to the guardian, who from the time of these rather ludicrous and very unfortunate occurrences regarded him with disfavour.

'Byron, your mother is a fool!' one of the boys remarked bluntly to the future poet.

'I know it!' was the gloomy reply.

But though he 'knew it,' Lord Byron wanted the spirit to beg her to behave less unreasonably. Without showing any lack of filial respect, the twelve-years-old boy might have entreated Mrs. Byron out of her maternal care for his feelings and interests, to have more regard for the wishes of his schoolmaster and his guardian. At least he might have shown both the Doctor and the Earl, that he was sensible of their goodness in taking much trouble and enduring many annoyances for his advantage. The boy who failed to show this feeling by words or manner, seemed of course to be taking Mrs. Byron's part in the unseemly contention. In siding thus far with such a mother the schoolboy was, of course, actuated by no higher motive than a desire for as many holidays and as much pleasure as possible. Though quick enough to resist his mother when she thwarted his wishes or stung him with bitter speech, it is conceivable that in his girlishness—the girlishness that set him 'crying for just nothing' before his Aberdeen schoolmates—he shrunk from provoking a conflict with her, when she seemed to be overflowing with affection for him. Under these circumstances it is not wonderful that Lord Carlisle thought too unfavourably of the boy, of halting gait and clouded brow, heavy features and sullen look, who spoke with his mother's brogue, and could not enter a room without dropping his eyes to the carpet, from a shyness, in no way distinguishable from the shyness of rusticity. Indeed, who could have predicted thus early and thus late in his story that this sheepish, awkward, thankless little fellow, after almost surviving his Scotch accent and learning how to conceal his lameness, would, ten short years hence, assume a shape of singular elegance and a face of

peculiar loveliness, and break upon the world almost in the same instant as the greatest poet and brightest coxcomb of his generation? Is it wonderful that, when the brown bud had changed to perfect blossom, Byron never cared to talk of the Dulwich school, which he remembered only as a place, where his mother had made herself more than usually contemptible, and he had played the part of a young cub rather than of a young nobleman?

This least satisfactory period of Byron's boyhood—the two years preceding his entrance at Harrow—covered, however, two passages of feeling in which he figures more agreeably and creditably. The season which a great poet recalls as the time when his feelings first passed into song, and the season when he is known to have been deeply stirred for the first time by the beauties of scenery, are points of interest for his biographers and admirers. Though Dr. Elze attaches some importance to the four lines of satirical doggerel, on the old woman of Swan Green, most readers will be content to rest on the poet's assurance that his 'first dash into poetry' was made in 1800, from the inspiration of the love—the second of the 'grand passions' of his boyhood—which he conceived in that year for his cousin Margaret Parker; the girl, whose dark eyes, long eyelashes, Grecian face, and transparent beauty went to the grave some two years after the poet fell in love with her. In the summer of the following year (1801), the boy accompanied Mrs. Byron to Cheltenham, where he found inexpressible pleasure in watching the Malvern Hills 'every afternoon at sunset,' whilst his foolish mother pondered over the words of the fortune-teller who, after winning the lady's confidence by telling her that her son was lame (a piece of information that of course could only have come to the prophetess through divination), went on to predict that the lame boy 'should be in danger from poison before he was of age, and should be twice married—the second time to a foreign lady.'

Because he was deeply stirred by the news of Mary Duff's marriage, it does not follow that the lad's passion for his cousin Margaret was nothing more than one of those transient states of feeling that arise in young people from ordinary flirtations. On the contrary, he was terribly in earnest; and so was the gentle girl, who returned his affection with the fervour and sincerity of a loving and guileless nature. Having declared his worship of her in the verses, which he had forgotten, and possibly had done well to forget, before his twenty-sixth year, he honoured her when she was no more with the elegy (written in his fifteenth year) beginning,—



'Hush'd are the winds, and still the evening gloom,  
Not e'en a zephyr wanders through the grove,  
Whilst I return, to view my Margaret's tomb,  
And scatter flowers on the dust I love.'

The attachment was so genuine and strong on either side that it is conceivable, if Margaret Parker had lived, the world would never have heard much of the poet's other cousin, Mary Chaworth, or been invited to sit in judgment on the domestic trials of the lady who, to every one's misfortune, became the poet's wife. It does not follow that the poet differed from most other men in being able to love two women passionately at the same time. What is most curious in Byron's personal story before his marriage, and also in his personal story after that lamentable event, will be missed by those who persist in regarding the 'passions' of the earlier period as nothing more than so many exhibitions of sentimentalism, and in regarding the 'attachments' of the later period as nothing more than so many exhibitions of libertinism. Of the later attachments something will be said hereafter, but only enough for the requirements of honest biography, certainly nothing in the way either of defence or palliation. Of those 'attachments' (there is no need to call them by a harsher name) no Englishman, reared in the ways of domestic virtue and altogether fortunate in his domestic circumstances, can think without feelings of repulsion, to be equally divided between astonishment and disgust. But the real Byron will never be known to readers who cannot be led to see that, even in the most deplorable stages of the later period of his career, he never made a profession of love without being for the moment inspired by it, or without for the moment believing himself to be completely dominated by it.

In the domain of the affections, he was from boyhood till his hair whitened a man of so acute a sensibility that it may well be termed morbid. To this excessive sensibility, and the various kinds of emotionality that necessarily attended it, must be attributed the quickness with which his 'passions' succeeded one another. Fortunately for society, such sensibility is rare. It is even more uncommon for such sensibility to be united with the singular retentiveness of memory that was another of Byron's most remarkable endowments. Still more unusual is it for so perilous a sensibility and so strong a memory to be found in co-operation with an even stronger imagination. It is only by considering these three several forces, and thinking how they could not fail to act and re-act upon one another, that the reader will realise how it was that even in his early boyhood, when



they were only nascent, Byron could in two years survive his first love for little Mary Duff, so as to be capable of a stronger passion for Margaret Parker, and yet be so deeply affected on hearing that the object of the earlier attachment had passed by marriage to another worshipper. That the second love followed so soon on the first was due to the boy's sensibility. His agitation at the sudden announcement of Mary Duff's marriage was due, in the first instance, to the quickened memory that brought before him every one of the child's lovable endowments; then to the imagination that heightened all the charms which captivated his childish fancy; and then again to the sensibility that occasioned an instantaneous renewal of the affection, though it had been followed by the stronger attachment to another object. Though two 'passions' could not co-exist in the breast of a man so exceptionally constituted, it was natural for several 'passions' to occupy it successively, and to follow one another with perplexing rapidity. In a being so swayed by feeling, memory, and fancy, a passion, long dead, might at any moment revive. And it was because they knew him to be so constituted that a few of the poet's closest friends, knowing little of Lady Byron, even to the last regarded it as possible that he and she would survive their mutual animosity, and resume the affection that for several months unquestionably existed between them.

To the same forces may be referred what was most remarkable in Byron's love of beautiful scenery. To afford him all the gratification he was capable of deriving from the study of nature's aspects, it was necessary that a landscape should remind him of scenes that had filled him with admiration and gladness in his childhood. It was at Genoa, when he was almost on the threshold of his life's last year, he wrote no inconsiderable portion of his biography in the lines,—

'He who first met the Highland's swelling blue,  
Will love the peak that shows a kindred hue,  
Hail in each crag a friend's familiar face,  
And clasp the mountain in his mind's embrace.  
Long have I roam'd through lands which are not mine,  
Adored the Alp and loved the Appennine,  
Revered Parnassus, and beheld the steep  
Jove's Ida and Olympus crown the deep;  
But 'twas not all long ages lore, nor all  
*Their* nature held me in their thrilling thrall;  
The infant rapture still survived the boy,  
And Loch-na-gar with Ida look'd o'er Troy,  
Mixed Celtic memories with the Phrygian mount,  
And Highland linns with Castalie's clear fount,  
Forgive me, Homer's universal shade!  
Forgive me, Phœbus! that my fancy stray'd;

The north and nature taught me to adore  
Your scenes sublime, from those beloved before.'

In this respect the man was faithful to the boy. In the pleasure, which came to him first at Malvern and afterwards at Cheltenham, in his fourteenth summer, from the hills that reminded him of the Highland mountains, delight at the scenery offered to his gaze was curiously and characteristically blended with delight at the scenery which quickened memory brought before his mental vision. Moore may have been guilty of sentimental extravagance in urging that—'a boy, gazing with emotion on the hills at sunset, because they remind him of the mountains among which he passed his childhood, is already, in heart and imagination, a poet.' Countless boys,—without a single thread of imaginative force, and with no feeling more poetical than the home-sickness, that causes the dullest Swiss exile or any brainless Savoyard organ-grinder of the London streets to pine for his native scenes,—have experienced similar emotion under similar circumstances. But it cannot be questioned that, in thus passing in Fancy's freedom from the distant hills to the heights of Lachin-y-gair, this particular boy made a distinct step towards the domain of feeling, in which he was destined to spend his brief and unrestful manhood.

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## CHAPTER VII.

### HARROW.

Dr. Drury—'Good-bye, Gaby'—The Fat Boy—His Hatred and Love of Harrow—'All the Sports'—Cricket and Rebellion—Passionate Friendships—Girlish Sentimentality—Tender-hearted Harrovians—The Poet's Affection for his Schoolmaster—'The Butler Row'—'Little Latin and Less Greek'—Declamations—Lord Carlisle's 'Indeed!'

Soon after this visit to Cheltenham, Byron went to Harrow, a school that has been repaid in lustre for its beneficial part in the formation of his character. Entering the school in the middle of his fourteenth year, he was a 'Harrow boy' for four entire years, from the summer of 1801 to the summer of 1805, when, after passing the holidays at Southwell where Mrs. Byron had taken a house (Burgage Manor) in the previous year, he went into residence at Cambridge. A better school than Harrow, or a better master than Dr. Drury, could not have been found for the lad of neglected education, undisciplined temper, and unprepossessing manners, who, sorely

needing the discipline of such a seminary, would have rebelled against any government, that was not at the same time firm and sympathetic.

The personal characteristics of the 'wild mountain colt,' in whose eye Dr. Drury detected mental force, and in whose exhibitions of temper the sagacious master discerned a spirit to be more easily led by a silken string than by a cable, differed greatly from the young Lord Cadurcis whose 'long curling black hair and large black eyes' arrested little Venetia Herbert's attention on her first survey of his pale face and slender form, when he was still in his twelfth year. Whilst it is improbable that he retained to his twelfth year the curls which are known, from the miniature given to his nurse, May Gray, to have fallen about the shoulders of the Aberdeen child, it is certain that the poet's eyes were blue-gray (though their long lashes *were* black), that his chestnut hair at its darkest period just missed the deepest brown of auburn, and that from infancy to manhood's threshold he was remarkable for the 'tendency to corpulence' which he is said by Moore to have 'derived from his mother.' The boy, who was led in his fourteenth year to Dr. Drury's presence by Mr. Hanson (the young gentleman's solicitor), was a decidedly plump youth. To the dissipation of romantic visions of a certain tombstone with a handsome stripling in a recumbent posture upon the moss-grown slab, it must even be recorded that, towards the close of his schooldays, the boy whom Dr. Drury governed so wisely was a *fat* boy. The hateful epithet comes to this page from the pen of a rude writer, but it came to him through an ultrapolite writer from the lips of the charming gentlewoman, Miss Pigot of Southwell, who recalled for Tom Moore's advantage, how the 'fat bashful boy' looked and demeaned himself on entering her mother's drawing-room, when he had just finished his third year at Harrow. With cheeks encased in fat, and his hair combed straight over his forehead, the young poet looked such a perfect 'gaby' that the narrator in her girlish sauciness actually told him so. The talk at the poet's first interview with the young lady, who was for some years his most familiar friend of the gentler sex, having turned on the character of Gabriel Lackbrain in the play lately performed at Cheltenham, she responded to the formal bow he made on rising to go, by saying 'Good-bye, Gaby.' To his credit it should be added that, instead of blushing and looking wrathful at the sally, he acknowledged it with a bright smile, and stayed for a few minutes longer, to show how well he could talk on getting the better of his shyness.



To know the real Byron, instead of the unreal and rather absurd Byron of romantic biography, and realise the difficulties under which he fought a painful way to a premature grave, readers should be duly mindful of his morbid propensity to fatten as well as of his lameness, and should also realise how the two afflictions worked *together* in a curious way for his discomfort. In a later chapter of this narrative, attention will be called to the painful measures he employed to correct this disposition to fatten, which the infirmity of his feet prevented him from fighting in a natural and healthy way. But as he did not become unwieldy corpulent, till he ceased growing in height, it is enough to remark that one could not have found amongst his Harrow schoolmates a stouter boy than this young gentleman, who a few years later was remarkable for delicacy of face and elegance of figure.

Whilst they are comical for their remoteness from the truth, the mistakes respecting Byron's appearance are interesting to connoisseurs of evidence for showing by turns how soon people may forget the personal characteristics of their familiar friends, and how likely people are to be misled in matters of detail—especially on questions of colour—by those portraiture in black and white, on which they rely chiefly for information respecting the semblance of individuals they have never seen. Known only to a few dozens of his fellow-countrymen before the morning on which he awoke to find himself famous, and then known to few persons outside the world of fashion, Byron, after shining for a few seasons in London drawing-rooms, left England for ever in early manhood, without having been beheld in the flesh by so many as ten of every thousand English people who, fascinated by the writer, were curious about the man. Wherever he dwelt in foreign lands, his life was one of comparative seclusion—especially of seclusion from natives of his own land. Henceforth his aspect could only be known to the majority of his readers by the black-and-white portraits, exhibited in the windows of printsellers or in his published volumes:—the pictures that, whilst affording a more or less inadequate notion of his profile and the beauty of his mouth and chin, tell nothing of the sweetness and gaiety of his smiles:—the pictures that caused even his former acquaintance to think of him as a dark man. Since Dallas, who knew him intimately during the perfection of his personal attractiveness, was brought by these portraiture to think he had 'fine black hair,' it is not surprising that the younger Disraeli, who never saw the poet, made the same mistake.

From the fantastic things to be found in the biographies of

the poet about his life at Harrow, one would suppose that the discipline which did him much good, afforded no sharp trials to the proud boy who had never been taught to obey, the sensitive boy whose Scotch brogue provoked derision,—the ill-taught boy who entered the school so badly prepared for its studies that had it not been for Dr. Drury's consideration he would have been placed in a class of little fellows greatly his juniors,—the shy boy whose shyness made him uncouth,—the quick-tempered boy whose 'rages' only stimulated his tormentors to worry him more maliciously,—the sullen boy who was ordered about like a servant and then licked for obeying orders sullenly. Is it not written in Mr. Moore's book that his noble friend 'rose at length to be a leader in *all* the sports, schemes, and mischief of the school?' and does not Dr. Elze follow the lead by applauding the youth 'for excelling in *all* games and sports?' There is something pathetic in the commendations thus poured on the poor boy whose lameness debarred him from even participating in some of the games of his comrades. Though he claimed credit for having been 'a very fair cricketer' at Harrow, Byron certainly never excelled in the game. Indeed, cricket was at so low an ebb in the school whilst he was its 'leader,' that at the inter-scholastic match in which he took part in 1805, Eton beat Harrow in a single innings, with two runs to spare,—Byron's score being *seven* in the first, and *two* in the second innings of his eleven. The passages of the poet's journals that speak of his 'cricketing,' and the line of the 'Hours of Idleness' that refers to 'cricket's manly toil' as though he had himself 'joined in' it with unqualified pleasure, are 'bits of bounce,' to be read betwixt laughter and tears, and ticketed together with the similar passages relating to the poet's pedestrian exploits.

These little essays of 'make-believe' excepted, Byron himself is frank and truthful enough about the darker side and sterner experiences of his time at Harrow. Far from pretending that from the first he enjoyed the school which he loved so cordially at last, he admits that he detested the place for the first two years and a half,—that is, till time had given him the privileges, and immunities, and authority of an upper-form boy. It is a curious instance of Moore's carelessness, that reduces by exactly two-fifths the period of the poet's dislike of his school. 'Accordingly,' says the biographer, 'we find from his own account, that, for the first year and a half, he hated Harrow,'—a way of misstating the case, in which the Irishman is followed by Dr. Elze. The words equally precise and emphatic of Byron's journal are, 'I always *hated* Harrow till the last year and a



half, but then I liked it.' Elsewhere in the same reminiscences he says, 'I was a most unpopular boy, but *led* latterly.' From the considerable quantity of information about his life on the Hill, it is sufficiently clear that the period of his extreme unpopularity was identical with the period of his hatred of the school and misery in it. As an underling he was pugnacious, resentful, and in general disfavour; but when he had risen to a position to give the word of command, and indulge his characteristic and essentially amiable, though slightly vain-glorious, taste for protecting little fellows and patronising his juniors, he ceased to provoke enmities and gained a reputation for kindness. And it cannot be questioned that as a junior he had reason for disliking the school where even the infirmity, of which he was so sensitive, exposed him to insults. When, in later time, the coarser of his assailants in the press sneered at the bodily as well as mental deformity of the wretched rhymester, who not content with maligning Christianity had even presumed to lampoon the Prince Regent, the poet remarked with affected indifference that he had not gone through a public school without learning that he was deformed. 'Unfortunately,' Leigh Hunt observes respecting his friend's lameness, 'the usual thoughtlessness of schoolboys made him feel it bitterly at Harrow. He would wake, and find his leg in a tub of water.' Such indignities, which were largely accountable for his long dislike of Harrow, came to an end in 1804, when he was in the proud position to record in one of his note-books: 'Drury's Pupils, 1804. Byron, Drury, Sinclair, Hoare, Bolder, Annesley, Calvert, Strong, Acland, Gordon, Drummond.' As one of 'Drury's Pupils,' the youthful poet could be benignant to 'juniors,' such as his 'favourites' Clare, Dorset, C. Gordon, De Bath, Claridge, and J. Wingfield, whom in his loftiness and superabundant lenity he even, to use his own words, 'spoilt by indulgence!' His tombstone became a throne, with courtiers regarding him reverentially from a distance. These also were the days of the 'cricketing' referred to in his journal with curious self-complacence; when he could amuse himself for half an-hour with the bat, whilst juniors did the bowling and fielding, and a fog made the runs for him.

Volume I. of 'Lillywhite's Scores and Biographies,' containing the record of the Eton-Harrow match of 1805, affords evidence touching the grounds the poet had for writing in February 1812 to Master John Cowell, on that young gentleman's departure for Eton: 'As an Etonian, you will look down upon a Harrow man; but I never, even in my boyish days, disputed your superiority, which I once experienced in



a cricket match, where I had the honour of making one of the eleven, who were beaten to their hearts' content by your college in *one innings*.' These words of course imply that their writer played on the same terms as the rest of the Harrow Eleven, without any exceptional favour or privilege; but, in the absence of positive testimony to the point, it may be assumed he was allowed a substitute to run for him. Though cricket eighty years since was no such arduous sport as the cricket of this year of grace, it is scarcely credible that Byron, whilst 'leading' his school, did all that his words imply in the match. Anyhow, regard being had to his infirmity, and the low state of cricket at Harrow when, in spite of his lameness, he was allowed to play against the 'Eton Eleven,' it is not surprising that Harrow was badly beaten in a single innings.

His choice of familiar associates at Harrow certainly justifies Moore's remark that 'it is a mistake to suppose that, either at school or afterwards, he was at all guided in the selection of his friends by aristocratic sympathies.' But few persons will concur with the same biographer in thinking that he was actuated by *pride* in surrounding himself with 'favourites' who, from being his inferiors in age and strength, looked to him for protection; the delight in patronising being referable to vanity rather than to pride.

The most remarkable and characteristic features of Byron's intercourse with these 'favourites,' is the girlishness of the sentiment he lavished upon them and the girlishness of the regard with which they repaid his affection. *L'amitié, qui dans le monde est à peine un sentiment, est une passion dans les cloîtres*, is an aphorism, that he adopted from Marmontel, and put into one of his note-books in his third year after leaving Harrow,—doubtless because it struck him as peculiarly applicable to his enthusiasm for his friends at school and afterwards at the university. 'My school friendships,' he wrote in the journal, that may be called the 'Autobiography of his Boyhood,' 'were with *me passions* (for I was always violent), but I do not know that there is one which has endured (to be sure some have been cut short by death) till now. That with Lord Clare began one of the earliest, and lasted longest—being only interrupted by distance—that I know of. I never hear the word "*Clare*" without a beating of the heart even *now*, and I write it with the feelings of 1803-4-5, *ad infinitum*.' The record is the more interesting, because of the approximate date, given to the commencement of this peculiar development of sensibility and affectionateness. The friendship for Lord Clare, which began in 1803 (the poet's sixteenth year), having been

'one of the earliest,' the Harrow 'passions' may be regarded as the affairs of the later half of his school life.

But if they were 'passions,' these school friendships were the 'passions' of a girl, rather than of a boy endowed with the robustness appropriate to his sex. They were girlish in their tenderness, tearful vehemence, and incontinence of emotion. They were girlish (on both sides—but especially on Byron's side) in the jealousies, suspicions, and piques that attended them. Sometimes it is scarcely less exasperating than diverting to observe the 'tiffs' and reconciliations of these tender-hearted Harrovians who, when least girlish, are so many sentimental French lads, wearing their hearts on their sleeves, rather than stout English boys, holding their hearts in their breasts. The misunderstandings of these mutually 'loving' and 'beloved' youths arose out of the absurdest trifles, which caused them to mope, and shed tears, and write 'tiffy' letters to one another because they were not so much 'loved' as they ought to be. Byron is in his last year at Harrow, when he is aggrieved by the cruel coldness of a school-mate, who has positively had the inhuman hardness to address the poet in a letter as 'My dear Byron,' instead of 'my dearest.' At another time the Harrow 'leader' is fretting because the same correspondent, instead of loving his dearest Byron more than anyone else, seems to care less for him than for John Russell. To another school-mate who has wounded his sensibilities, the Poet of the Hill writes in the following strain of anguish and indignation :—

'You knew that my soul, that my heart, my existence,  
If danger demanded, were wholly your own ;  
You knew me unaltered by years or by distance,  
Devoted to love and to friendship alone.

'You knew—but away with the vain retrospection,  
The bond of affection no longer endures,  
Too late you may droop o'er the fond recollection,  
And sigh for the friend who was formerly yours.'

That the poet's influence at Harrow during his last year was considerable, and that he was in a certain way the leader as he afterwards boasted of the school, is shown by the fact that, whilst living in a small set of sentimental worshippers—for whose peculiar sentimentalism he was himself altogether or at least chiefly accountable—he was still so far acceptable to the majority of the upper boys, as to be made the chief director of their comical demonstration against the election of Dr. Butler to be Dr. Drury's successor. But it cannot be said that the influence, which disposed a considerable proportion of the cleverer and more sensitive boys to play the part of 'friendship-sick maidens,' was a wholesome influence. One can readily

believe, as Dr. Butler seems to have believed, that it was by no means conducive to the manliness that should distinguish the sons of English gentlemen,—and, indeed, the sons of Englishmen of every class. Of course, the influence, so completely resulting from sympathy with the single boy of an exceptional constitution and peculiar temperament, was transient. It was not in the nature of things that,—on the disappearance of the Apostle of Friendship with his power of verse and the set of admirers to whom he communicated his peculiar sentimentalism,—the boys of a great public school should continue to cherish ‘passions’ of friendship for one another, and turn tearful at being styled ‘dear’ instead of ‘my dearest’ in the heading of a letter. It was not even possible for the boys, whom Byron had infused with his peculiar girlishness, to continue in the way of feeling to which he introduced them. On contact with the world these Byronised schoolboys became men of common-sense; and the Apostle of ‘passionate friendship’ was deserted by his disciples. All this is told by Harness, where he says of his former patron at Harrow,—‘Of his attachment to his friends, no one can read Moore’s “Life,” and entertain a doubt. He required a great deal from them—not more, perhaps, than he, from the abundance of his love, freely and fully gave—but more than they had to return.’

But there was another side to the boy’s Harrow life, to which it is a relief to turn, after thinking of its girlishness. If they are honourable to the master, the poet’s feelings for Dr. Drury throughout his school days and to the end of his life are no less creditable to the pupil. Nothing more is required to show how gentle and docile a creature Byron would have been in his childhood under proper management, and how amenable he was in his older infancy to authority, that commended itself to his sense of right and justice, than his consistent and unwavering gratitude to the great schoolmaster, who governed him for four years with sympathy and at the same time with firmness. ‘Dr. Drury,’ he says in the autobiographic Journal, ‘whom I plagued sufficiently too, was the best, the kindest (and yet strict, too) friend I ever had—and I look upon him still as a father.’ The letter, in which the poet announced to his old master his acceptance by Miss Milbanke and his approaching marriage, is in the same vein of filial confidence and affection.

Of the other examples of the poet’s regard for his famous preceptor, there are two that may not be omitted from these pages. The schoolboy had become a man; and the man had almost in an hour mounted to a giddy eminence of celebrity, and was still in the full enjoyment of his first intoxicating



triumphs, when, on being asked by Dr. Drury why he had not sent his old master copies of his works, he answered with unaffected modesty and simple truth, 'Because, sir, you are the only man I never wish to read them.' Years later,—when he had withdrawn from his native land for ever, under the thunder of the loud calumny to which he grew by degrees comparatively indifferent, and the fire of 'the speechless obloquy,' that never ceased to work like poison in his soul,—on putting into the Fourth Canto of 'Childe Harold' some lines to the discredit of the system of education that prevails in English schools, he was careful to guard the verses with a note of homage and reverential explanation, so as to spare his dear old master the pain that might come to him through misapprehension of the author's purpose. The words of the poem, thus guarded from misconstruction, are—

' . . . . . not in vain  
 May he, who will his recollections rake  
 And quote in classic raptures, and awake  
 The hills with Latian echoes ; I abhor'd  
 Too much, to conquer for the poet's sake,  
 The drill'd dull lesson, forced down word by word  
 In my repugnant youth, with pleasure to record  
 ' Aught that recalls the daily drug which turn'd  
 My sickening memory ; and, though Time hath taught  
 My mind to meditate on what it learn'd,  
 Yet such the fix'd inveteracy of thought  
 That, with the freshness wearing out before  
 My mind could relish what it might have sought,  
 If free to choose, I cannot now restore  
 Its health ; but what it then detested, still abhor.'

The note runs thus, 'I wish to express that we become tired of the task before we can comprehend the beauty ; that we learn by rote before we can get by heart ; that the freshness is worn away, and the future pleasure and advantage deadened and destroyed, by the didactic anticipation, at an age when we can neither feel nor understand the power of composition which it requires an acquaintance with life, as well as Latin and Greek, to relish, or to reason upon. For the same reason we can never be aware of the fulness of some of the finest passages of Shakespeare ("To be, or not to be," for instance), from the habit of having them hammered into us at eight years old, as an exercise, not of mind but of memory, so that when we are old enough to enjoy them, the taste is gone, and the appetite palled. In some parts of the Continent, young persons are taught from more common authors, and do not read the best classics till their maturity. I certainly do not speak on this point from pique or aversion towards the place of my education. I was not a slow,

though an idle boy : and I believe no one could, or can be more attached to Harrow than I have always been, and with reason :— a part of the time passed there was the happiest of my life ; and my preceptor (the Rev. Dr. Joseph Drury) was the best and worthiest friend I ever possessed, whose warnings I have remembered but too well, though too late—when I have erred, and whose counsels I have but followed when I have done well or wisely. If ever this imperfect record of my feelings towards him should reach his eyes, let it remind him of one who never thinks of him but with gratitude and veneration—of one who would more gladly boast of having been his pupil, if, by more closely following his injunctions, he could reflect any honour upon his instructor.'

Notwithstanding all this evidence of the affectionate dutifulness, which distinguished Byron's conduct to his principal school-master, both during his stay at Harrow and throughout the years of his manhood, there exists a notion that he was chiefly remarkable at Harrow for unruliness and a taste for rebellion. The people, whose ingenuity has especially delighted in drawing indictments against him from scraps of his writings and in dealing with the figures of his poetry as though they were facts of his personal story, have even found testimony of the poet's naughtiness at school in the following lines, of 'The Address to the Duke of Dorset,'—

'Ah ! though myself, by nature, haughty, wild,  
Whom Indiscretion hail'd her favourite child ;  
Though every error stamps me for her own,  
And dooms my fall, I fain would fall alone ;  
Though my proud heart no precept now can tame,  
I love the virtues which I cannot claim.'

Evidence of a sensitive conscience and spiritual modesty, rather than of a strong propensity to evil, evidence especially interesting to biographers for showing at how early a date Byron's practice of magnifying his own misdeeds began—these words of an imaginative boy, playing the part of a stern moralist, should scarcely be taken as a culprit's confession. The witness against himself should at least be allowed the benefit of his avowal of 'loving the virtues.'

Apart from the misdemeanours of which he was unquestionably guilty towards Dr. Butler, there was as little reality in the 'rebellious' as there was in the 'cricketing,' to which the poet refers so jauntily in his journal ; and on examination, even those misdemeanours are found altogether insufficient to sustain the grave charge of a propensity for rebellion. The whole business of 'the Butler Row' grew out of a trivial affair. When Dr. Drury retired from the Mastership of Harrow in 1805, there

were three candidates for the office,—Mark Drury, Evans, and Butler; and naturally enough Byron came to the fore of the boys, who from affection of their old master entertained a strong opinion, that the office which a Drury had filled so honourably ought to descend to a Drury, who, of course, *as* he was a Drury, would fill it with equal honour. Each candidate had his party of well-wishers amongst the boys, who—of course, without seriously supposing their voices would or should determine the issue of the contest—behaved as though the election rested with them. The parties lampooned and hooted one another, and worked themselves into a prodigious excitement about a matter, that was no more their affair than the choice of the next President of the United States. On the election of Dr. Butler, the beaten parties united in imagining themselves very badly treated. In the excitement Byron behaved badly, and was guilty of at least one overt act of rebellion, for which he would of course have been severely punished, had not the new Head Master wisely determined to take a lenient view of misconduct, committed without calm deliberation and in consequence of his own success. Byron (a boarder in Dr. Butler's house) pulled down the gratings before some of the Master's windows, and on being called upon to answer for his conduct, had the impudence to say without a word of apology, that he tore down the gratings 'because they darkened the hall.' On the other hand, the poet ranged himself on the side of order, when some of his confederates proposed to burn down one of the classrooms,—an outrage from which they were withheld by their leader, who reminded them that in doing so they would destroy the desks, illustrated with the names of their fathers and grandfathers. But though he saved the class-room, he persisted to the last in showing disrespect to Dr. Butler; even going the length of declining at the end of the term to accept the invitation to dinner which the Doctor sent to him as an upper boy, in accordance with etiquette of ancient usage. Moore even goes so far as to assert, on the authority of one of Byron's schoolfellows, that on being asked his reason for declining the invitation, the poet replied to his interrogator, 'Why, Dr. Butler, if you should happen to come into my neighbourhood when I was staying at Newstead, I certainly should not ask you to dine with me, and therefore I feel that I ought not to dine with you.' As Dr. Butler, on seeing this story in Moore's 'Life,' assured the biographer that the anecdote had very little foundation in fact, it may be assumed that the explanation was worded less offensively. Byron's worst act in the whole of this puerile business was the last of his offences. Instead of dismissing his dislike



of Dr. Butler on leaving Harrow, he was so wrong-headed as to publish in the 'Hours of Idleness' some offensive verses against the Master, who had given him no grounds for enduring displeasure.

But though Byron cannot be acquitted of behaving badly in this affair, much may be said in palliation of his misbehaviour. Devotion to his old master was the cause of his strong feeling about the election, that occasioned so much excitement in the school. Instead of being the originator of the riotous movements, that arose in the school immediately after the election, he was actually holding aloof from his party when he was entreated to command it. Indiscretion is venial 'even in an Upper Boy,' whose pride is tickled by an invitation to 'lead his comrades.' There is no doubt he believed the new Master to be unworthy of his office, and conceived he was under no moral obligation to accept the ruler who had been imposed upon him. His most mutinous acts resulted from the heats of contention. The sensitive and quick-tempered boy imagined he had been insulted by a chief, who in order to humiliate him had exceeded the limits of his authority. The offensive verses were inserted in the 'Hours of Idleness,' when the poet was under the exasperating impression that the Master was in the habit of holding him up to the reprobation of his former schoolmates, as a dangerous companion and a discredit to the school. Under these circumstances the indignant boy may be pardoned for behaving for a while with the perversity and vehemence of youth. Anyhow, to wipe out every speck of the discredit put upon his character by the affair, it was only needful for Dr. Drury's tractable and loyal-hearted pupil to repent of his folly, and express the feeling to Dr. Drury's successor. Byron did both. On coming to his right mind, the young poet hastened to Dr. Butler and made him an ample apology. Before leaving England the poet was on good terms with his former enemy; and he started for Greece with the purpose of withdrawing the offensive lines from the 'Hours of Idleness,' in the next edition of the poems. In the same spirit, on coming to review his life in his twenty-sixth year, he wrote in the journal of reminiscences, 'I was a most unpopular boy, but *led* latterly, and have retained many of my school friendships, and all my dislikes—except to Dr. Butler, whom I treated rebelliously, and have been sorry ever since.' These are the facts of Byron's misbehaviour—a passage of boyish effervescence, followed by ample atonement and generous repentance—to which some of his calumniators have pointed in evidence that he was from his youth an ill-conditioned fellow.

Note 40 to the 4th Canto of 'Childe Harold' tells how little

Byron profited by the classical instruction of the school, that is so largely indebted to him for its celebrity. Had he come to the school at an early age and after better preparation the note would probably never have been written, and the poet would probably have taken a more favourable view of the educational method of England's public schools. He might not have entertained the ambition of editing Greek and Latin classics, but it is more than possible he would have been delighted to—

‘ . . . quote in classic raptures, and awake  
The hills with Latian echoes.’

Coming to the school in a state of ignorance, that put him at a disadvantage with class-mates, greatly his inferiors in natural quickness, he never had the heart for the steady labour that could alone enable him to compete with them for the honours of the term. Perhaps no boy ever brought less Latin and Greek to Harrow, or after rising to the highest form carried less of those learned tongues away with him to his university. The very volumes of Greek plays, which he gave to the library on his departure for Cambridge, afford evidence in his own handwriting of the insignificance of his ‘classical attainments’ at the time when, in the technical and strictly scholastic sense of the words, they were at their highest. To mathematics he had a strong repugnance;—his natural inaptitude for even the most familiar processes of arithmetic being so unusual that, in the later period of his life when it was his humour to watch his domestic expenditure with a jealous eye, he experienced no little difficulty and distress of brain in ‘auditing’ his ‘weekly bills.’ Had he distinguished himself in the Latin and Greek classes, it would have been less remarkable that he went to Cambridge without having acquired facility and exactitude in the spelling of his mother-tongue; for in the earlier years of the present century, it was almost a point of honour with a public-school-boy, who knew Homer well, to spell his own language indifferently. The bad spelling of the Harrovian, who prided himself on his considerable knowledge of English literature, deserves notice; for whilst it may be regarded as indicative of the *literal* carelessness with which he perused the pages of his favourite authors, the deficiency may also be regarded as evidence that he was not altogether free from the particular kind of intellectual indolence, that is often united with mental sprightliness and seldom fails to characterise in some degree the poetic dreamer.

But if he was weak in his Latin and still weaker in his Greek, Byron distinguished himself at Declamations,—a scholastic exercise in which the elder boys of the school delivered as orations, in Dr. Drury's presence, the essays which they had

previously written on given subjects. In these exercises, so excellently designed to qualify the youthful orators for one department of public life, Byron was successful in attitude gesture, and vocal address; and on one occasion he distinguished himself in a way that greatly impressed his most critical hearer. After delivering the earlier part of his composition with his usual address, he suddenly broke away from the restraint of the written words, and no less to the Doctor's surprise than sympathetic apprehension for the boy's failure passed to extempore utterances that, without any kind of impediment, flowed through well-balanced periods to a felicitous conclusion. 'I questioned him,' Dr. Drury told Moore, 'why he had altered his declamation? He declared he had made no alteration, and did not know, in speaking, that he had deviated from it one letter. I believed him; and from a knowledge of his temperament am convinced, that, fully impressed with the sense and substance of the subject, he was hurried on to expressions and colourings more striking than what his pen had expressed.' Byron had probably displayed this power of strenuous speech, when Dr. Drury said of him to Lord Carlisle, 'He has talents, my Lord, which will add lustre to his rank;' praise that, to the Doctor's disappointment, only drew from the Earl a look of surprise and a significant 'Indeed!'

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## CHAPTER VIII.

### HARROW HOLIDAYS.

Lady Holderness's Death—'Baby Byron'—His Sister Augusta—Her Plain Face and Sweet Nature—Life at Southwell—Mary Anne Chaworth—Matlock and Castleton—Annesley Hall—Who was Thyrza?—'The Dream'—Its Falsehood and Malice.

HOWEVER good his school may be, and however efficient his tutors, they are seldom the most important, never the only, forces of a boy's education. To observe the influences that are usually more powerful over his nature than his official and recognised teachers, one must follow the lad of quick feelings and lively intelligence from the class-room and the play-ground to his home, and be the sharer of his holidays.

In Byron's case it is the more necessary to do this, because the pleasures of his Harrow holidays were more influential in the development of his affections and genius, than they would



have been, had the shy, sensitive, meditative boy been strongly interested in the severer pursuits of his school. In those holidays he learnt to love his sister, and conceived his passion for Mary Chaworth. In those holidays he explored (in the saddle—not on foot, as his biographers suggest) some of the loveliest parts of Nottinghamshire, and during hours of solitary gladness studied the tranquil beauties and stately aspects of Newstead. In those times of vacation he had also larger opportunities for reading novels,—those toys of the frivolous, those comforters of the aged, and those powerful teachers of the young.

Immediately after her son's departure for his first term at Harrow, Mrs. Byron went to Brighton for several months. She was still breathing by turns the sea-air and the breezes from the downs, when, on the old Countess of Holderness's death, she came to the opinion it would be well for her boy and his sister to come together. So long as he remained at Aberdeen, no painful question arose respecting the separation of the children. But it was otherwise when on coming to Sloane Terrace, Mrs. Byron discovered that, though the Countess had no disposition to refuse Mrs. Byron's boy occasional access to his sister, she had no wish for Mrs. Byron's acquaintance. It is not surprising that the aged lady, with little cause to think tenderly of Mad Jack Byron, had no intention to be troubled with visits from his second wife, whose least agreeable qualities were not unknown to the dame of high degree. And had Mrs. Byron been a sensible woman, and more thoughtful for her child's welfare than her own dignity, she would have waived a few points of social etiquette, in consideration of the Dowager's age and infirmities, and have allowed the boy the pleasure and benefit of associating with his sister on terms, to which the Countess could consent. But Mrs. Byron, after speaking proud words of the Gordons and scornful words of the Dutch woman's presumption, determined to keep the children asunder. This state of things, however, came to an end in 1802; and henceforth Byron had, in his holidays, sufficient though by no means frequent opportunities of associating with his sister, who during their separation had never ceased to think of him as 'the baby' that he was when she last kissed him in Holles Street, and who for that reason, as well as from a humorous perception of the poet's least manly though by no means least agreeable qualities, used to call him 'Baby Byron' after he had become famous. When the fourteen-years old boy began to know and love his sister (the only person of her sex, whom he ever regarded for any considerable period, with deep, steady and unchanging affection), she was eighteen years of age, and it is probable that

he was at their first interview disappointed by her appearance, which cannot in a single particular have accorded with his boyish conceptions of feminine loveliness. For even at the age when girlish charms are most apparent, the Honourable Augusta Byron would have been rated as a decidedly plain girl, or overlooked altogether on account of her insignificance. Notably wanting in beauty of feature, her appearance—from the day of her presentation at Queen Charlotte's court, to which she was in later time officially attached—was chiefly remarkable for the want of 'style' and of taste in dress, that made her (to use Mrs. Shelley's well-chosen expression) 'the Dowdy-Goody' of all her acquaintance. It speaks not a little for Byron's affectionateness that, from the first hour of his intercourse with her, he was the fond brother of so unattractive a sister. In one respect only was Augusta Byron fortunate in her personal endowments. Her not unintelligent countenance had an expression altogether accordant with the sweetness of disposition, the womanly goodness and the unaffected piety, that, unaided by any kind of cleverness, made her from first to last the chief influence for good in her brother's life.

From Brighton Mrs. Byron moved to Bath, where she was joined by her son during the summer holidays of 1802; when in the costume of a Turkish boy, with a diamond crescent in his turban, he attended her to Lady Riddle's masquerade. Returning soon after the Bath season to Nottingham, where she resumed her former lodgings, Mrs. Byron resided there till she moved to Southwell in the later half of 1804, and established herself at Burgage Manor, a pleasant roomy house on 'the Green,' and drew about her the neighbours, amongst whom the poet made several congenial acquaintances. A better place of abode could not have been found for a gentlewoman in Mrs. Byron's rather peculiar circumstances than this pleasant little town, with its collegiate church and picturesque vicinity, its public coffee-room with papers and gossip for the gentlemen, its assembly room for concerts and dances, and its coterie of clergy and other local gentry—such as the Pigots, the Leacrofts and the Housons—who, in their simple contentment at finding the youthful peer within their borders, were lenient to Mrs. Byron's want of refinement, and concealed their disapproval of her vagaries. Near enough to Newstead, for its story and beauties to be known to every inhabitant of the town, the Byrons enjoyed at Southwell all the homage due to their patrician quality and territorial greatness. Before his Cambridge career ended, Byron had of course seen enough of the town's provincial pettiness, and spoken sharp words of its dullness and delight in scandal;



but after his return from Greece, when needy Mr. Dallas was looking out for a place of cheap and agreeable seclusion, the poet wrote to him from Newstead Abbey (Oct. 11th, 1811): 'Now I know a large village, or small town, about twelve miles off, where your family would have the advantage of very genteel society, without the hazard of being annoyed by mercantile affluence; where *you* would meet with men of information and independence; and where I have friends to whom I should be proud to introduce you. . . . My mother had a house there for some years, and I am well acquainted with the economy of Southwell, the name of this little commonwealth.'

Mrs. Byron, however, was still in the lodgings at Nottingham, when, in the summer of 1803, her son came to her from the school, which he had not yet ceased to 'hate.' How the boy must have enjoyed his solitary rides about Nottinghamshire on his clever horse,—in the fleckered shade of green lanes and in the sun that was never too hot for him; far away from those ungenerous enemies to his peace of mind, who thought meanly of him for his lameness and imperfect acquaintance with the Greek irregular verbs! It was a memorable vacation (this year) for the boy who, in its course, put himself on pleasant terms with Lord Grey de Ruthen, the tenant under chancery and occupier of Newstead, till the heir was on the point of 'coming into his own.' That the schoolboy might have some present enjoyment of the property, that would be in his hands six years hence, Lord Grey de Ruthen gave him a standing invitation to the Abbey, and even assigned him a room in the mansion, for his use at pleasure. At the same time the doors of Annesley Hall, the home of his cousins—the Chaworths, were thrown open to the young peer, who had already seen the heiress of the fair domain in London.

Little thinking what trouble would come of it, Miss Mary Chaworth—with her sweet voice, piquant air, strangely beautiful face, and all the gaiety of girlhood in its eighteenth year—covering the boy with kindness and filling him with gladness, inspired him with his third grand passion. She was all the more benignant to him, on the first occasion of his crossing her threshold, in order that he should be the less likely to remember that hideous duel which had now for nearly half a century kept Chaworths and Byrons asunder. A bed at Annesley was put at the service of the visitor, who was already provided with a sleeping apartment at Newstead. So the young peer passed the hours pleasantly between the two houses, spending however less time under the shadow of the ancestral ruins, than in the drawing-room where the young heiress sung again and again, for



his particular delight, the song (with a pleasant air) of 'Mary Anne,'—a name of witchery and music, surely, to any poet loving a particular Mary Anne. The heiress made up a party for a trip to Matlock and Castleton, and invited the schoolboy to join it. Of course he joined it; and the young people—four girls, two gentlemen, the young lord from Harrow, with a chaperon of suitable years and complaisance (possibly Mrs. Chaworth, the heiress's mother, who was then living at Annesley Hall)—went off to the Derbyshire springs, and did as people used to do at Matlock and Castleton, and at the delightful spots round about them. At Matlock there was much dancing that afforded the lame lad poignant misery; for in his inability to dance, he could only stand or sit in a corner of the ball-room, whilst his goddess danced with the partners who were eager to lead her out. Still he would rather endure anguish in the corner of the hot room, than vainly seek happiness where she was not. For he was possessed with a passion,—the third and greatest of all his grand passions.

On her return from Derbyshire, Miss Chaworth was attended by the schoolboy, who, having slept at Annesley before the trip, resumed the room, which had been assigned to him. Instead of availing himself, at first, of the permission to pass the nights under his cousin's roof, he preferred to sleep at Newstead, because of a fancy that the portraits of the departed Chaworths would in the hours of silence and darkness descend from their frames, and as restless ghosts disturb the slumber of the Byron, who had ventured to enter the house long closed to the bearers of his name. But after encountering 'a bogle' on his darksome way from Annesley to Newstead, he thought he might as well speak with ghosts at home as with ghosts at large. Though trivial, this story deserves notice, as it points to a nervous weakness that attended Lord Byron throughout life. In his weaker and more indolent moods, Byron was superstitious. A believer in presentiments and unlucky days, in apparitions and ghostly warnings, he would sometimes discover prophetic significance in strange coincidences, and refer to supernatural agency what he should have referred to indigestion.

It is not surprising that Miss Chaworth was slow to detect her young visitor's 'passion' and that for a moment she found it difficult to refrain from laughter, when the shy boy, of 'rough and odd' manners (if Moore may be trusted), blurted out his staggering proposal for the union of their hearts and their 'lands rich and broad.' In their pity for the boy, who suffered so long and acutely from his entertainment of a preposterous hope, people have felt less than proper concern

for the feelings and embarrassment of the young heiress, on finding herself with so strange a suitor on her hands. Divided between the fear of giving pain by treating the affair too lightly, and the fear of causing the boy deeper and more enduring distress by treating the affair too seriously, she may well have been perplexed, and in her perplexity must more than once have wished the lad at—Harrow. The care she had for his feelings is the more commendable, as there was nothing in his appearance to win from her even the kind of favour, with which bright and well-looking school-boys are usually regarded by grown women. If his countenance, 'notwithstanding the tendency to corpulence derived from his mother,' already 'gave promise of that peculiar expression into which his features refined and kindled afterwards,' the faint indications were accompanied with an air that betrayed he was more than duly conscious of them. Moore learnt from several quarters that, at this point of his boyhood, the young Lord of Newstead was 'by no means popular among girls of his own age;' and it was less due to his want of personal comeliness than to his self-consciousness and vanity that the young ladies found him 'insufferable' and a 'perfect horror.' In truth, the lad who appeared a laughable gaby to Miss Pigot in the summer of 1804, must have seemed an egregious gaby to Miss Chaworth in the summer of 1803. The very devices, by which he sought to plant himself in the heiress's affections, were more likely to offend than to conciliate a young woman with a proper sense of her own dignity, and a fairly quick sense of the ridiculous. In his egregious vanity, he tried to play the part of a lady-killer, and to pique his coldly benignant mistress into loving him by a boastful exhibition of a locket, given him by a fair adorer, whom the heiress of Annesley was thus invited to regard as her rival. If this locket was given him, as Moore suggests, by his cousin Margaret Parker, the use to which he now put it shows how completely his latest passion had for the moment driven from his breast all generous tenderness and chivalric regret for the girl, whose elegy he had written some eight or nine months since,—and whose image some eight years later became the chief, if not the only, inspiring force of the 'Poems to Thyra.'

But however droll and amusing they may be to cynical spectators of his proceedings, the absurdities of a boy's fierce love, whether it be for the high-born heiress of a great estate or for an obscure actress of a provincial theatre, are little calculated to assuage the first anguish or lessen the subsequent

annoyances of the failure of his suit. It did not comfort Arthur Pendennis for losing the fair Fotheringay, to think how his uncle was chuckling in his sleeve, and to know that even Emily's papa thought him a simpleton. Though he may be presumed to have ordered his pony and ridden off to Newstead, instead of 'darting out of the house' and making at full speed for the Abbey on his feet, in the fashion described by half-a-dozen different historians, no one with sympathy for the griefs of beardless boys—certainly no man who can recall how he himself sickened long syne and all but died of 'calf-love'—will suspect the biographers of exaggeration in recording that the fifteen-years-old peer carried away from Annesley a heart full of scalding anguish, after hearing either from the young lady's lips, or from the tongue of a spiteful tale-bearer, those torturing words—'Do you think I could care anything for that lame boy?' The disappointment was followed quickly by clear and agonizing recognition of all the folly of his futile suit, as well as of the madness of his baffled hopes. Quick to wound its possessor long before it taught him how to wound others, the boy's sense of the ludicrous, acting like acid on the etcher's plate, helped to bite Mary Chaworth's picture deeper into his memory. The recollection of his ignoble hunger for her 'lands broad and rich' and the gold that could restore the ruinous mansion in his park, intensified the torture of reflecting on his brief, insane, ennobling desire for her beauty and love. Turning his pale cheek scarlet, and in an instant covering his brow with cold beads of wetness, as it came to his mind, that mean desecration of Margaret Parker's love-token gave sharper point and surer poison to the stinging words—'Do you think I could care anything for that lame boy?' Possibly this cruel misadventure was largely, if not altogether, accountable for the fervour with which the boy, on his return to Harrow, in his strong yearning for sympathy and in his despair of being loved by womankind, threw himself into those 'friendships' that were so curious a feature of his later time at school.

In the ensuing summer—the holidays of 1804, which he passed chiefly at Southwell—the boy visited Annesley, and wrote in one of Miss Chaworth's books the set of verses, for which he was indebted to another poet,—

'Oh Memory, torture me no more,  
The present's all o'ercast;  
My hopes of future bliss are o'er,  
In mercy veil the past.



Why bring those images to view  
 I henceforth must resign ?  
 Ah! why those happy hours renew,  
 That never can be mine ?  
 Past pleasure doubles present pain,  
 To sorrow adds regret,  
 Regret and hope are both in vain,  
 I ask but to—forget.'

Soon after he transferred these verses from a printed book to the leaf, that would be almost certain to come again under her gaze, Byron (now in the middle of his seventeenth year) bade Miss Chaworth farewell on the hill (near Annesley), to which 'The Dream' has given the twofold interest of poetry and history,—

' the hill  
 . . . crown'd with a peculiar diadem  
 Of trees, in circular array, so fix'd,  
 Not by the sport of nature, but of man.'

It can readily be believed that, though his countenance was calm, the feelings which he held well under control at this interview were feelings of unutterable misery and hopelessness.

'The next time I see you, I suppose you will be Mrs. Chaworth?' he said at the moment of parting.

'I hope so,' was the lady's only answer.

In the August of the following year (1805), when Byron—no longer a Harrow *boy*, but a *man* who had already chosen his university and college—was staying at his mother's house on Southwell Green, Mary Anne Chaworth was married to Mr. John Musters, a handsome man and notable sportsman, who after taking the bride's name on the occasion of the marriage and bearing it for a few years, resumed his former surname. Perhaps a more foolish story never passed from a mendacious prattler to a serious biography than the anecdote told by Moore, of the manner in which Byron was informed that this marriage had taken place, and of the self-possession he displayed on the unexpected announcement. It runs thus, on the authority of some person who was of course present at the scene that can hardly have taken place:—'His mother said, "Byron, I have some news for you."—"Well, what is it?" "Take out your handkerchief, I say." He did so, to humour her. "Miss Chaworth is married!" An expression very peculiar, impossible to describe, passed over his pale face, and he hurried his handkerchief into his pocket, saying, with an affected air of coldness and nonchalance, "Is that all?"—"Why, I expected you would have been plunged in grief." He made no reply, and soon began to talk about something else.' Is it

credible that even Mrs. Byron (with clear recollection of the painful agitation she had in former time caused her son by an abrupt announcement of Mary Duff's marriage) behaved in so cruel a fashion to her boy, whilst he was still suffering from the disappointment of his passion for Mary Chaworth? A woman must be far worse-tempered and worse-bred even than Mrs. Byron to behave so brutally to a love-stricken son. The woman, who, in a fit of passion with the child, could swear at him, and call him 'lame brat!' could not amuse herself thus malignantly with the bitter anguish of the man. Even when full account is taken of the propensity, which made Mrs. Cadurcis so eager for just 'one glass of' Lady Annabel Herbert's 'mountain,' there is no evidence to justify even a suspicion that Catherine Byron could *without provocation* act so atrociously. Again, is it conceivable that the news of Mary Chaworth's marriage came in this fashion as a surprise to the young lord, who was living within twelve miles of her park-fence? The heiress had been engaged to Mr. Musters for two years: Mr. Musters had obtained Letters of Licence to take the name of Chaworth before the marriage; all Nottinghamshire had been talking for weeks over the arrangements for the approaching wedding; the Byrons themselves would have been at their kinswoman's marriage, had not delicacy forbidden Miss Chaworth to invite her discarded suitor to the celebration. In the name of whatever little common-sense may be found in this mad world, outside lunatic asylums, is it conceivable that under all these circumstances Byron can have first heard of the wedding in the alleged manner? The whole story is nothing more than a clumsy re-production (with variations) of the story of the way in which Byron was suddenly informed of Mary Duff's marriage,—which took place in the year before Miss Chaworth's marriage. Either the narrator who was present at the scene 'mixed the two Maries,' so as to substitute the wrong one for the right one; or Moore was himself the maker of the mistake. It is quite conceivable that Moore muddled the story, which 'the narrator' told correctly.

Byron did not see his cousin Mary Chaworth after her marriage, till he dined with her at Annesley, at her husband's invitation in 1808; when he was deeply stirred by the appearance of her little girl,—the infant and the incident alluded to in the lines, dated from Newstead on 11th October, 1811:—

'I've seen my bride another's bride,  
Have seen her seated by his side,—  
Have seen the infant which she bore,  
Wear the sweet smile the mother wore,  
When she and I in youth have smiled,  
As fond and faultless as her child:—

Have seen her eyes, in cold disdain,  
 Ask if I felt no secret pain ;  
 And *I* have acted well my part,  
 And made my cheek belie my heart,  
 Return'd the freezing glance she gave,  
 Yet felt the while *that* woman's slave :—  
 Have kissed, as if without design,  
 The babe which ought to have been mine,  
 And show'd, alas ! in each caress  
 Time had not made me love the less.

A comparison of these lines with the no less familiar poem, 'Well! Thou art Happy' (dated 2nd November, 1808, and published for the first time in Hobhouse's 'Miscellany') affords a remarkable example of the way in which Byron sometimes toyed and dallied with his pathetic reminiscences of former passion so as to mystify and mislead his closest friends no less than the general multitude of his readers. In the earlier poem, written first about two years and eleven months before the poem of October 1811, he sung,—

When late I saw thy favourite child  
 I thought my jealous heart would break,  
 But when the unconscious infant smiled  
 I kissed it for its mother's sake.  
 I kissed it, and repressed my sighs, -  
 Its father in its face to see,  
 But then it had its mother's eyes  
 And they were all to love and me.

\* \* \* \* \*

I saw thee gaze upon my face,  
 Yet meet with no confusion there ;  
 One feeling only could'st thou trace  
 The sullen calmness of despair.

It is not surprising Hobhouse conceived those lines were addressed to Mary Chaworth, that the Editor of 'Murray's Standard Edition of the Byronic Poems' fell into the same mistake, and that the two sets of verses have been universally regarded as referring to the same woman and child,—the heiress of Annesley and her favourite infant. It is, however, certain that in composing the lines of October 1811, that refer to Mary Chaworth and her child, Byron was only reworking and utilizing his memories of the emotions, with which he had regarded Mary Duff (Cockburn) and her favourite child in 1808. The present writer has the authority of a witness, whose evidence on the matter is conclusive, for saying that, whilst he was a Cambridge undergraduate, Byron sought a renewal of his friendship with his first love; that he visited her at least on one occasion, in the character of a former and still faithful worshipper, after his withdrawal from the university; that the verses of November 1808, not only



referred to Mary Duff, but were actually penned and sent to Mrs. Cockburn by the poet. The testimony on these points is most important for demonstrating the endurance of Mary Duff's influence on the poet, and for showing how he played with his tenderest recollections, to the falsification of his own history, to the delusion of his admirers, and even to his own delusion.

And now comes the question who was 'Thyrza,'—to whose spirit in heaven Byron penned the five poems (to be found in the 'Occasional Pieces'), during the deepest gloom of the sorrow, that covered him in the closing months of 1811 and the earlier months of 1812? Moore says that Thyrza was a creation of the poet's imagination, and that the poems addressed to this 'imaginary object' of the poet's affection 'were the essence, the abstract spirit, as it were, of many griefs.' On the other hand, the Editor of Mr. Murray's one-volume edition of Byron's works is of opinion that Thyrza was the person, to whose death the poet referred in a letter dated October 11th, 1811 (the *exact* date assigned to the first set of verses to Thyrza), in the following words, 'I have been again shocked with a death, and have lost one very dear to me in happier times; but "I have almost forgot the taste of grief" and "supped full of horrors," till I have become callous; nor have I a tear left for an event which, five years ago, would have bowed me to the earth.' Surely the death (just heard of), for which Byron had not a single tear left, cannot have been the death of the person to whom the first poem to Thyrza—a poem written in tears and not to be read with tearless eyes—was addressed. The identity of the dates is not important:—for the dates assigned to their performances by writers may not be taken too precisely. The same date (October 11th, 1811) is also given to the 'Epistle to a Friend,' containing the last quoted verses about Mary Chaworth. But it can scarcely be supposed that the 'Epistle to a Friend,' the first poem to Thyrza, and the long letter to Mr. Dallas were written on the same day.

Moore speaks so confidently on the question, which had for years stirred the curiosity of Byron's admirers, that he may be presumed to have good reasons, possibly even Byron's own assurance, for the statement that Thyrza was an imaginary being. But even if Byron was himself the authority for the biographer's statement, it does not follow that Thyrza was a *mere* creation. If she was the offspring of the poet's tender recollections of two separate objects of his affection in former times,—say of two girls, each of whom had died after inspiring him with love,—he would be justified in speaking of

the heroine of the poems as a thing of imagination, and certainly would not be justified in speaking of her as the poetical portraiture of a single individual. In that case Thyrza, though a creation, would not be a *mere* conception; and the question would remain,—of whom was the poet thinking alternately or together when he wrote the successive sets of verses?

In one of Byron's journals reference is made to 'a violent, though pure love and passion' that possessed him in the summer of 1806, the summer of his first year at Cambridge, and co-existed with his vehement friendship for Edward Noel Long, who three years later was drowned on his voyage for Lisbon with his regiment. After speaking of the pleasant hours he spent with Long at Cambridge, the poet says, '*His* friendship, and a violent, though *pure*, love and passion—which held me at the same period—were the then romance of the most romantic period of my life.' Nothing more is known of this passion. Its cause and object may have survived the sentiment, and also the man whose pulses it quickened. It is not known whether Byron had on his departure for Greece survived the passion—in so far as a young man so strangely constituted could survive any vehement affection. It is, however, conceivable that the love was fervid when he started for the East, that he thought of this (to history nameless) girl often during his travels, and that she died in England during his pilgrimage. But even if all this and other things could be shown in a way to make it obvious that she was an inspiring force in the poems to Thyrza, it would still remain certain that Margaret Parker was also an inspiring force in the same unutterably tender and pathetic poems.

Thyrza is dead; so is Margaret Parker.

Thyrza died when the poet was far away from her; so did Margaret Parker.

Thyrza had been the poet's companion in these deserted towers of Newstead; Margaret Parker had also been his companion there.

The mutual love of Thyrza and the poet was known only to themselves, their smiles being 'smiles none else might understand:' so it was with Byron and Margaret. When 'Margaret coloured through the paleness of mortality to the eyes' at the casual mention of her lover's name, Augusta (his sister) 'could not conceive,' says the poet in his journal, 'why my name should affect her at such a time.'

Thyrza and the poet exchanged love-tokens: Byron and Margaret Parker did the same. The poet wore Thyrza's love-



token ; Byron wore Margaret Parker's locket next his heart. He *is said* to have shown the locket with vile vanity to Mary Chaworth ; but he valued it enough to wear it next his heart in Italy, towards the close of his career.

The mutual affection of Thyrza and the poet was the sentiment of young people, so innocent of desire, that 'even Passion blushed to plead for more.' So was the mutual devotion of Margaret and her cousin.

In her peculiar beauty, alike delicate and evanescent,

'A star that trembled o'er the deep,  
Then turn'd from earth its tender beam,'

Thyrza resembled Margaret Parker, who is styled 'one of the most beautiful of evanescent beings' by her lover, who adds in the autobiographic memoir, 'I do not recollect scarcely anything equal to the transparent beauty of my cousin. . . . She looked as if she had been made out of rainbow—all beauty and peace.'

Besides dying at a distance from her lover, Thyrza died before the poet had heard of her illness. In like manner Margaret died before Byron had even a hint of her danger. 'I knew,' he says, 'nothing even of her illness till she was no more.'

On the other hand, the poems contain lines that seem to point to some other person than Margaret. At the time of her death, she and her youthful lover (at Harrow) were not 'by many a shore and many a sea divided.' Margaret having been dead for some years, Byron, 'when sailing o'er the Ægean,' can scarcely have thought of her as being alive, and gazing at the moon. And, for the same reason, whilst he was lying ill of fever at Patras, he cannot be imagined to have found comfort in thinking that Margaret knew nothing of his pain. Though some license is permitted to interpreters of poetry, as well as to poets, these touches cannot be construed as pointing to the poet's cousin. They may have no historical significance, and have been introduced only for pathos or mystification. But *if* they point to a girl, whom he hoped whilst in Greece to see on his return to England, the girl so pointed at cannot have been his cousin Margaret.

None the less certain however would it be that the poems point to Margaret Parker, and that she was at least *an* inspiring force of the verses. All the points of similitude between Margaret's story and Thyrza's story being taken into consideration, it cannot be questioned that, if the course of the Cambridge 'passion' resembled in any great degree the course of the poet's passion for Thyrza, its object would be inseparably associated in his mind with the girl whom she resembled so



closely in beauty and fate. The two loves would be so linked and blended in his memory, that it would be impossible for him to think of the one without thinking also of the other. The poems inspired by either of the dead girls would be inspired by both. In that case the girl, whose name is unrecorded, would be no less accountable than the girl whose name we know, for the strains of love and desolation. On the other hand, to show that Byron after Margaret's death never loved a girl, whose fate resembled hers, would be to prove that she alone was Thyrza. It yet remains to state the strongest piece of evidence that Margaret was the sole inspiring force of the famous series of poems. One of those curious personal revelations, which escaped the poet during the last months of his existence, was the revelation that the original of Thyrza was one of his cousins who died of consumption. On the voyage from Genoa to Cephalonia (1823), Byron said to Trelawny, 'When I first left England I was gloomy. I said so in my First Canto of "Childe Harold." I was then really in love with a cousin.' [Thyrza, he was very chary of her name], Trelawny observes, 'and she was in a decline.' Byron's cousin Margaret Parker died of a decline, and was the only one of his cousins to die of that malady after inspiring him with love. True she died long before he left England; but to his poetic fancy she was still living and fading away when he thought of her on his travels. The mystification and historic inaccuracy of the poet's statement do not weaken the evidence afforded by the words, that Margaret and Thyrza were the same person in *his* mind.

And now, after passing his eyes over a few dates, the reader must consider a remarkable fact which, though pointed to in a previous chapter, has been withheld from prominence, till his mind should have been fully prepared to accept so strange a matter.

In 1797, when he was only nine years old, Byron fell in love with Mary Duff,—his love for her being no ordinary childish fondness for a congenial playmate, but a consuming passion.

In the summer of 1800, when he was twelve and a half years old, he conceived a stronger passion for Margaret Parker, who nine years after her death became a chief (if not the only) inspiring force of the poems to Thyrza.

In November 1802, he wrote Margaret Parker's elegy, just about two years and four months after falling in love with her.

In the summer of 1803, when he was in the middle of his sixteenth year, he fell in love with Mary Chaworth.

In 1804—(and here is the marvellous fact)—when he was

still in an early stage of the long-enduring anguish caused by the disappointment of his passion for Mary Chaworth—the news of Mary Duff's marriage, coming too suddenly upon him through his mother's defective sensibility and want of caution, moved him so strongly that he was within an ace of falling into convulsions. 'My mother,' Byron says in the autobiographic memoir, so often referred to in previous pages, 'used always to rally me about this childish amour; and, at last, many years after, *when I was sixteen*, she told me one day, "Oh, Byron, I have had a letter from Edinburgh, from Miss Abercromby, and your old sweetheart Mary Duff is married to a Mr. Co . . . . ." And what was my answer? I really cannot explain or account for my feelings at that moment; but they nearly threw me into convulsions, and alarmed my mother so much, that, after I grew better, she generally avoided the subject—to *me*—and contented herself with telling it to all her acquaintance.' Out of this incident, and Mrs. Byron's habit of talking about it, arose the absurd cock-and-bull story of Byron's behaviour at Southwell on hearing of Mary Chaworth's marriage.

Hence it appears that Byron had not only survived his first great love sufficiently to entertain a still stronger love for another object, but had also survived the second passion sufficiently to conceive a still more vehement passion for a third object, and was even yet in the anguish consequent on the disappointment of this third passion, when the memory of the earliest of the three precocious attachments so nearly overpowered him.

It will be said by many a reader that all this is very strange,—so unusual and unlike ordinary human nature, as to be almost incredible. Byron's nature, with its feminine sensibility and masculine combativeness, *was* far outside the lines of ordinary human kind. 'Childe Harold,' 'Cain,' and 'Don Juan' could not have come from a mind constituted in the usual way of human nature; and to understand and know the poet, people must be able to accept unusual things, that are not in accordance with their personal experience of human feelings and actions.

The reader knows how to account for the strong emotion, that was inexplicable to Byron himself, by referring it to the strongly retentive memory, lively imagination, and quick sensibility of the mind that, after heightening the beauty of its recollections by the exercise of poetical fancy, made no distinction between the remembered facts and the loveliness imparted to them by its own action, but with all the results of quickened sensibility dealt with the remembrances, that were partly fictitious, as though they were altogether real. Memory,



fancy and feeling were the three forces that enabled the poet to derive a far larger measure of gladness from the remembrances of his native hills than the joy that had come to him in childhood from the sight of the hills themselves,—and rendered the sorrows of former time even more afflicting to his sensibility, when he reflected upon them, and by reflection intensified them, than they were in actual experience. They were the three prime forces of a machine which, though often—perhaps most often—set in action by circumstances independent of its possessor, could also be put in motion, and certainly sometimes was put in motion by his own will. Washington Irving was right in suspecting that the poet in dealing with his memory was the cunning farmer of a fertile soil, and deliberately brooded over the past for the sake of the stimulus which came from the process to his sensibility and creative energy. Whilst thus reviving the past, for the uses to be had of its joys and sorrows, Byron could rearrange and modify his recollections in order to turn them to better poetical account, and could even weave pieces of pure fiction into them.

Examples of the way, in which he would thus manipulate his tenderest and saddest recollections, even to the falsification of his own personal history, may be found in the poems and the passages of poems, which readers are most ready to regard as so many passages of autobiography in verse. To those who, instead of regarding the poet's marriage as a mere affair of convenience, believe that his regard for Miss Milbanke was one of genuine affection, it must appear more than probable that even the most touching of all the unutterably pathetic pictures of 'The Dream,'—the picture which Moore thought himself 'justified in introducing historically' into his account of the wedding—owes quite as much to the writer's imagination as to his memory :—

‘I saw him stand  
Before an altar with a gentle bride ;  
Her face was fair, but was not that which made  
The starlight of his Boyhood ;—as he stood  
Even at the altar, o'er his brow there came  
The self-same aspect, and the quivering shock  
That in the antique Oratory shook  
His bosom in its solitude ; and then—  
As in that hour—a moment o'er his face  
The tablet of unutterable thoughts  
Was traced,—and then it faded as it came,  
And he stood calm and quiet, and he spoke  
The fitting vows, but heard not his own words,  
And all things reel'd around him ; he could see  
Not that which was, nor that which should have been—  
But the old mansion, and the accustom'd hall,



And the remember'd chambers, and the place,  
 The day, the hour, the sunshine, and the shade,  
 All things pertaining to that place and hour,  
 And her, who was his destiny, came back  
 And thrust themselves between him and the light :—  
 What business had they there at such a time ?”

And how about the account of the wedding in the poet's memoranda, with which these doleful verses are said by Moore to correspond ‘in so many of its circumstances’? From the biographer's abstract of the prose account, it appears that on waking on the nuptial morning the poet was held by the ‘most melancholy reflections, on seeing his wedding-suit spread out before him;’ that before the ceremony he ‘wandered about the grounds alone;’ and further it is told—‘He knelt down, he repeated the words after the clergyman; but a mist was before his eyes,—his thoughts were elsewhere; and he was but awakened by the congratulations of the bystanders, to find that he was—married.’ This is all. Hence, the account in the poet's note-book agrees with the picture of the poem, in some of the unimportant, but in none of the important particulars of the latter. The whole affair was over before the bridegroom could collect his wandering thoughts, and he had a vague feeling of surprise at finding himself married :—The same may be said of fifty out of every hundred bridegrooms. He knelt down and repeated the words after the clergyman :—and he was quite right in doing so. What bridegroom does otherwise? He walked about the garden till he was summoned to the celebration of the marriage :—what better place for walking can be imagined? or what better way of whiling away the time till the bride should be dressed? He was low-spirited at the dawn of the eventful day :—it is not unusual for a bridegroom to be so, if he is a nervous man. Though he has decided on it deliberately, and may be confident he is about to take a wise step, a nervous man is apt to have misgivings when he is on the point of doing a momentous and irrevocable act. But in what important points does this account resemble the passage of the poem? The prose account had no single word of reference to Annesley and its well-remembered chambers, to the old mansion or to ‘her, who was,’ the poet's ‘destiny.’ From the *memoir*, of which Moore talks so absurdly, it does not appear that Byron, either before or at or after the ceremony, had a single thought about Mary Chaworth on his wedding-day. And, as readers will see shortly, there are grounds for a strong opinion that she never approached his mind, to trouble it, at any moment of the honeymoon.

Readers of ‘The Dream’ should bear in mind that it was

written at Geneva, just a year and a half after the marriage, and about six months *after* Lady Byron left her Lord for ever. It was written (in July 1816) when the poet was in a mood to persuade himself that, after all, he had never really cared much for the lady, who had dismissed him so unceremoniously;—and when he was also in the humour to slap the lady's face with a poem, which should tell her and all the world that another woman had years before and all through his matrimonial time possessed his heart. The labour of writing 'The Dream' was an effort of art; the poem is a work of an incomparable art; the publication of it was an act of revenge. And after the wont of acts of vengeance, the deed of spite recoiled on the doer's head,—by making the world believe he had never loved his wife, and confirming the world in its opinion that he had treated her very badly.

Byron is believed never to have seen Mary Chaworth after dining with her in 1808. Once (whilst he and Lady Byron were on loving terms) he thought of visiting her, but was saved from the false and perilous step by the advice of his good sister—ever his Guardian Angel. But though he never again saw Mrs. Musters (Mr. Chaworth had by this time returned to his old surname), Lady Byron—when she and her husband were still a mutually loving couple—met the heiress of Annesley in society. How the two women eyed one another, what they thought of each other are matters for the imagination. Men's wives are apt to think lightly and suspiciously of their husbands' 'old flames.' On seeing his bride for the first time, a woman seldom fails to discover her former suitor has made a poor choice.

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## CHAPTER IX.

### LORD BYRON OF TRINITY.

Despondency—Eddleston, the Chorister—Dr. William Lort Mansell—College friends—Hobhouse on Byron's Nature—Eighteen Long Years Hence—'Hours of Idleness'—Lord Carlisle—College Debts—Cambridge Dissipations—The 'Edinburgh Article'—Walter Scott's Opinion of the Article—Who Wrote It?—The Poet's Regard for Cambridge—Honour done the Poet by the University.

GOING up to Cambridge reluctantly in October 1805, Byron left the University in the beginning of 1808, after taking the honorary degree to which, as a nobleman, he was entitled.

To account for the heaviness of heart with which he approached the seat of learning and passed his first terms in it, he says that it pained him to quit Harrow, that he had wished to go to Oxford, that his sense of loneliness in the world oppressed him, and that it made him miserable to think he was no longer a boy. The gaiety of his companions only deepened the melancholy of the freshman, who wanted the homage of his Harrow 'favourites,' and was still pining for the bride who was another's bride. Holding aloof from most of the undergraduates, who offered themselves to his acquaintance, as soon as he had taken possession of a set of rooms appropriate to his dignity, the young peer, during his first year at Trinity, spent much of his time in solitude, and most of his other time in the society of his former schoolfellow, Long, or in communion with the sweet-voiced chorister, for whom he conceived a regard that may not be referred altogether to that vulgarest kind of amiable insolence,—the delight of patronising one's social inferiors. Probably it flattered the young lord's self-esteem to take so humble a person under his protection; and doubtless the fortunate youth, of whom Byron wrote to Miss Pigot, 'I certainly love him more than any other human being,' was at much pains to retain his patron's favour. But arrogance on the one side and obsequiousness on the other would not of themselves have sustained the curious friendship that endured, without any apparent diminution of fervour and steadiness, till Eddleston's death in 1811. Being to an hour two years younger than the poet, this well-mannered and affectionate boy was still in his sixteenth year, when he first won Byron's regard.

Had Byron brought from Harrow enough Latin and Greek to place him creditably with the studious men of his year, he would possibly have come to Trinity with a lighter heart, and left Cambridge on better terms with its Professors. In every race so much depends on 'the start,' it is not surprising that the young peer—who with better preliminary training and a fairer prospect of success might have entertained a desire for academic honours, and justified the ambition by winning them—determined to avoid the course, in which, at the outset of the running, he would have competed under vexatious and humiliating disadvantages with young men, inferior to him alike in rank and natural ability. To his tutor it was soon apparent that the young nobleman, who lived chiefly with an old Harrow schoolfellow and one of the youngest of the college choristers, meant to attend as few lectures as possible, and to hold aloof from the more serious pursuits of the University. After the



Long Vacation of 1806, when he had gradually become less shy and more sociable, the peer displayed a purpose of running the usual career of a Trinity nobleman.

As they seem to have heard nothing of his two previous volumes of verse, printed by a Nottinghamshire bookseller for private circulation, it was not surprising that, till he published, for sale to all who cared to buy it, a third book of poetry, containing some equally feeble and saucy satire on his University, Lord Byron of Trinity was mistaken by the Master (Dr. William Lort Mansell) and the tutors of his College for a young man of ordinary endowments, who differed in nothing more important than his lameness from the other lads of birth and affluence, who thought it good fun to make night hideous by roaring in chorus under the Master's bedroom window, 'We beseech thee to hear us, good Lort! Good Lort, deliver us!' Like other young nobles and fellow-commoners, with whom he co-operated in equally riotous and common-place exhibitions of puerile hilarity, Lord Byron occupied luxuriously furnished rooms, gave 'breakfasts' and 'wine-parties,' and 'suppers,' and was waited on by a valet instead of a college 'gyp.' The proprietor of two big dogs,—the superb Newfoundland (Boat-swain) and the ferocious bull-dog (Nelson),—Lord Byron of Trinity kept a couple of horses (one of them a large-boned grey animal) on which he rode fairly well, and a coronetted carriage in which he posted to and fro between Cambridge and London, London and Southwell. On returning to the University after the Long Vacation of 1807, he brought up 'the bear,' destined (as he averred with appropriate seriousness) to compete for a Trinity fellowship,—the same bear that two years later guarded one pillar of the chief entrance to the mansion at Newstead, whilst a wolf kept watch at the other post of the stately portal. Of course, at a time when all modish gentlemen were duellists, and the use of deadly weapons was a part of every young nobleman's education, pistol-cases and fencing-foils were always conspicuous in Lord Byron's rooms; and it being understood at the beginning of the present century that a gentleman should know how to use his fists, as well as 'the hair-trigger' and 'small sword,' it was needless for his lordship's visitors to ask whether he could provide them with 'the gloves,' when it was their humour to have a set-to at boxing on his Turkey carpets. In these and a score other matters Lord Byron of Trinity did like the other young gentlemen who had the *entrée* of his college-rooms. He may, perhaps, have been a little more ostentatious of his fire-arms, and rapiers, and boxing gloves,—for even in his early boyhood he made a favourite toy

of the pistol, which he liked to think would put him with his lameness on equal terms with adversaries of the steadiest footing ; and in his constant desire to divert attention from the infirmity, which telling heavily against him in sword-exercise placed him even more at the mercy of competent 'bruisers,' the lame poet was sometimes comically boastful of his prowess with the blunt sword and 'the gloves.' The unquestionable excellence of his swimming was a matter in which he differed from most of his associates at the University. And whilst he was distinguishable from the other mounted 'gownsmen' by the colour of his large-boned grey steed, he was still further distinguishable by the eccentricity of his riding costume,—the '*white coat*' and '*white hat*,' that made Hobhouse regard the poet with hot dislike, and even brought the two young men to arrangements for a duel, before they joined hands in a friendship that survived even the poet's death. But these trivial shades of difference could not be expected to affect the judgment of the college tutors who, having good reason to regard Byron as a common-place Trinity lordling and still better reason (after the publication of '*The Hours of Idleness*') for deeming him a lordling with no very strong genius for satire, had the best reason for astonishment on finding he '*had it in him*' to produce such keen, strenuous, scorching and irresistibly comical verse as the best things of the '*English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*.'

But whilst playing, in this commonplace way, the part of a conventional '*Trinity nobleman*,' and associating with Fellow-Commoners whose chief distinction throughout life was the honour of having been Fellow-Commoners of so famous a college, Byron had a small circle of peculiar friends, who would never have cared to know him intimately had his rank been his strongest note of introduction to their favour, and whom he would never have conciliated so studiously and drawn so closely to his heart had he valued men chiefly for their hereditary distinctions. Instead of being the '*snob*' of noble degree that biographers have represented him, valuing himself less on his deeds than his descent, and overflowing with secret disdain for people of ordinary origin, Byron throughout life chose his familiars from considerations altogether pure of the petty patrician insolence, that has been attributed to him on no better grounds, than the boyish verses to the glorification of his Norman progenitors and his occasional exhibitions in later time of an altogether reasonable and wholesome respect for his ancestral dignity. After Long's withdrawal from the university, the poet's most intimate friends at Cambridge were—Charles Skinner Matthews, a man of infinite humour and an intellect of the



highest order, who was regarded by all his contemporaries as a person designed by nature for a career of high achievement, Scrope Berdmore Davies, a man no less remarkable for elegance of taste than for a generous high-mindedness; Francis Hodgson, the exemplary Latinist and future Provost of Eton; William Bankes, whose letters and enduring attachment to his former schoolfellow are matters of history; and John Cam Hobhouse (Lord Broughton), who after holding firmly to his 'fellow-traveller in Greece,' through good report and evil report, with undiminished affection and admiration for him from this time of their riper boyhood to the hour that made Missolonghi a name of mourning throughout the whole world, stood forth the vindicator of his memory, when twice ten years had passed over the poet's grave. After declaring that truth was more precious to him than even his friend's honour, Lord Broughton delivered himself of these words, 'Lord Byron had failings—many failings certainly, but he was untainted with any of the baser vices; and his virtues, his good qualities, were all of a high order.'

The reader should take to heart the words, thus transferred to this page for a definite purpose. From his early manhood to his premature death, Byron was known more fully and precisely to Lord Broughton than to any other person. His familiar at Cambridge, his guest at Newstead, his comrade in Greece, his constant associate in London, his 'best man' at his wedding, his confidant at every point and turn of his domestic troubles, John Cam Hobhouse was at the poet's side from the commencement of their friendship at Cambridge to the moment of Byron's withdrawal from England. A few months later Hobhouse joined Byron at Geneva, and after accompanying him on the Swiss trip went with him to Italy. In the years of Byron's exile Hobhouse was with him repeatedly. Every incident that contributed to the poet's estrangement from his wife was known to Hobhouse. With every opportunity for knowing him thoroughly, in every minutest particular of his character and career, it is not conceivable that Hobhouse was uninformed or deceived respecting his friend's nature or respecting any important matter of his friend's conduct up to the time of his withdrawal from his native land; for whilst the poet's friend was a shrewd, discreet, judicious man of the world,—an excellent man of business, as Byron always called him; a man, moreover, of the strictest honour and truthfulness, as all his acquaintance knew,—Byron was frankness itself, incapable of keeping either his own secrets or even the confidences of a friend, and ever blabbing to gossip-mongers of whom he knew



scarcely anything the matters which his own interest required him to keep strictly to himself. Is it likely that the observant man of the world would not know everything of the affairs and temper of the friend, one of whose most charming characteristics was his absolute incapability of reserve? 'Part of this fascination,' Lord Broughton remarked, when Byron had been dead twenty years, 'may, doubtless, be ascribed to the entire self-abandonment, the incautious, it may be said the dangerous, sincerity of his private conversation; but his weaknesses were amiable; and, as has been said of a portion of his virtues, were of a feminine character—so that the affection felt for him was as that for a favourite and sometimes froward sister.' Hobhouse was by no means blind to the serious nature of some of his friend's failings. He often had occasion to observe and took occasion to deplore the selfishness, which he regarded as the dark blot and doleful blemish of the poet's character. There were occasions when Lord Broughton referred sorrowfully to this serious and incorrigible defect of an otherwise noble nature after the poet's death; one of the persons to whom he sometimes ventured to express the regret being the poet's sister Augusta, whose love of her father's son never blinded her to his failings. Of this defect more will be said hereafter.

Eighteen long years hence,—eighteen long years, during which so many of those who are now living will have gone from this life,—the world will have under its eye the book which will afford *the proofs*, that Byron's college friend was more than justified in saying what he said well-nigh forty years since, in the poet's defence against the charges preferred against him in the House of Lords by the Bishop of London. If eighteen long years were no more than eighteen short months, this book would not have been written. But why should hundreds of thousands of people during the next eighteen years be required to live and die under false, hideous, and depraving notions of what is possible in Christian human nature in this nineteenth century,—and all because the evidence, left by Lord Broughton for a happier century, is withheld from them? The time must, however, be waited out; people in the mean while comforting themselves as they best can with Lord Broughton's assurance that though 'Lord Byron had failings—many failings certainly, he was untainted with the baser vices; and his virtues, his good qualities, were all of the higher order.' \*

\* This paragraph was written under an erroneous impression, that was shared by men of letters and all persons of society, with the exception of a few individuals of the late Lord Broughton's familiar circle. Ever since certain of Lord Broughton's papers (usually spoken of as the

Let it not, however, be inferred from what appears on a former page that, in associating himself so closely with the five other members of his particular 'Trinity set,' the young peer can be credited with any sort of condescension, or that it could possibly have entered into the head of any one of those five gentlemen to think of himself, even for a moment, as being honoured by the peer's regard, *because* he was a peer. By birth and circumstances as well as by scholarly attainments and refinement the five men were gentlemen, who would have smiled at the notion that their friend's rank could affect either their opinion of him, or their disposition to be intimate with him. Had it been otherwise, the fact of Byron's 'set' of six containing no other nobleman would be less satisfactory evidence that he selected his college friends from motives and for considerations altogether disconnected from aristocratic sympathies. For had they been persons of Eddleston's social condition, it might be suspected that, whilst the young nobleman's conduct in the matter was determined by the delight of condescending to his inferiors, the others repaid his condescension with complaisance. The social condition no less than the intellectual quality of the five men precludes either suggestion. It was not in the nature of things for Byron to imagine he was descending from his nobility in attaching himself to them. On the other hand, it was not in the nature of things for his rank to be any considerable attraction to them. They joined hands with him because they liked him; and he chose them for his familiars because as men of taste and literary discernment they were congenial to him.

Towards the end of June 1807, when Cambridge was bright

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Hobhouse MSS.) were put under seal at the British Museum, persons had been looking forward to the time appointed for their publication, as a year that would see a large addition made to our knowledge of Byron's character and career. The world's interest in these papers was wholly due to the universal impression that they comprised papers about Byron. Everyone was under this impression, with the exception of the three or four individuals already referred to. There was no 'open secret,' as the phrase goes, in the matter. It was the closely kept secret of a few individuals, one of whom (within a few days of the publication of 'The Real Lord Byron') assured me that the opening of the Hobhouse MSS. at the British Museum would be an occasion of considerable disappointment to many persons, as they comprised nothing of any importance relating to Byron. The MSS. comprise writings in which the poet is referred to incidentally, but not a single writing of important Byronic testimony. This premature disclosure of the comparative insignificance and worthlessness of the much-talked-of Hobhouse MSS. may be rated as one of the several fortunate incidents arising from the social discussion of my book. Little will be henceforth heard of this collection of sealed writings, now that it is known to contain nothing of moment in respect to Lord Broughton's most celebrated friend.



with girls from country parsonages, and Cantabs were on the point of 'going down for the Long,' Byron, having kept the terms for his honorary degree, bethought himself whether he should 'come up' again for further residence in a place of which he was growing weary. Several of his friends were 'going down' with no intention of 'coming up' again. Eddleston—the well-looking and well-mannered young chorister, whom Byron had christened Cornelian, in reference to the cornelian heart which the lad had given to 'his patron!'—was no longer a member of the Trinity choir, having obtained through his patron's influence a clerkship in a house of business in London. Under these circumstances it is not wonderful that the poet thought of giving up his handsome rooms, and of withdrawing from the University till the beginning of the year, when he would run up for his degree, and after taking it would bid Alma Mater adieu for ever. 'I am almost superannuated here,' he wrote to Miss ('Good-bye, Gaby') Pigot of Southwell, dating from Cambridge, 30th June, 1807. 'My old friends (with the exception of a very few) have all departed, and I am preparing to follow them, but remain till Monday to be present at three *Oratorios*, two *Concerts*, a *Fair*, and a *Ball*. . . . I quit Cambridge with little regret, because our *set* are *vanished*, and my *musical protégé* before mentioned has left the choir, and is stationed in a mercantile house of considerable eminence in the metropolis. You may have heard me observe he is exactly to an hour two years younger than myself. I found him grown considerably, and, as you will suppose, very glad to see his former *Patron*. He is nearly my height, very *thin*, very fair complexion, dark eyes, and light locks. . . . The University at present is very gay from the fêtes of divers kinds. . . . The Masters and Fellows are very polite, but look a little *askance*—don't much like *lampoons*—truth always disagreeable.'

The lampoons, which caused the Trinity dons to look askance at the young poet, were the pieces of by no means strenuous satire on the University, her system of education, her professors, and the Trinity choir, that had recently appeared in 'The Hours of Idleness,'—published by Ridge, the Newark bookseller, with a dedicatory inscription to the Right Honourable Frederick Earl of Carlisle, by 'His Obligated Ward and Affectionate Kinsman, The Author.' Probably the boyish 'lampoons' of this far from contemptible collection of youthful poems were not more to his guardian's taste than to the taste of the dons, who cannot have felt themselves treated with fairness or civility in the following lines,—



The sons of science these, who, thus repaid,  
 Linger in ease in Granta's sluggish shade ;  
 Where on Cam's sedgy banks supine they lie,  
 Unknown, unhonour'd live, unwept for die :  
 Dull as the pictures which adorn their halls,  
 They think all learning fix'd within their walls :  
 In manners rude, in foolish forms precise,  
 All modern arts affecting to despise :  
 Yet prising Bentley's, Brunck's, or Porson's note,  
 More than the verse on which their critic wrote ;  
 Vain as their honours, heavy as their ale,  
 Sad as their wit, and tedious as their tale :  
 To friendship dead, though not untaught to feel  
 When Self and Church demand a bigot zeal.  
 With eager haste they court the lord of power,  
 Whether 'tis Pitt or Petty rules the hour ;  
 To him, with suppliant smiles, they bend the head,  
 While distant mitres to their eyes are spread.  
 But should a storm o'erwhelm him with disgrace,  
 They 'd fly to seek the next who fill'd his place.  
 Such are the men who learning's treasures guard !  
 Such is their practice, such is their reward !  
 This much, at least, we may presume to say—  
 The premium can't exceed the price they pay.'

But if Lord Carlisle regarded such satire with disapproval, he never told the author so. Acting on Sir Walter Scott's well-known rule for the acknowledgment of 'presentation copies,' and acting on it probably from a presentiment that after reading the poems he would find it more difficult to write civilly to the author, the Earl hastened to thank his ward for the copy and the dedication, before perusing the volume, in a letter which, though not devoid of politeness or cordiality, failed to satisfy the poet, who wrote to Miss Pigot of Southwell from London on 13th July, 1807, 'Lord Carlisle, on receiving my poems, sent, before he opened the book, a tolerably handsome letter :— I have not heard from him since. His opinions I neither know nor care about: if he is the least insolent, I shall enrol him with *Butler* and the other worthies. He is in Yorkshire, poor man! and very ill! He said he had not time to read the contents, but thought it necessary to acknowledge the receipt of the volume immediately. Perhaps the Earl "bears no brother near the throne," *if so*, I will make his *sceptre totter in his hands*.'

The poet's purpose of leaving Cambridge 'for good,' and visiting it again only to take his degree, was relinquished within a week after its announcement to Miss Pigot. 'Since my last letter,' he wrote to that young lady from Trinity, on 5th July, 1807, 'I have determined to reside *another year* at Granta, as my rooms, &c., &c., are finished in great style, several old friends come up again, and many new acquaintances made; consequently

my inclination leads me forward, and I shall return to college in October if still *alive*.'

On returning to the rooms, which upholsterers had 'finished in great style,' Lord Byron of Trinity was in the gayest spirits, and in the humour to 'lead' the modish undergraduates till next July, just as he had 'led' the boys at Harrow during his last year upon 'the hill.' Bringing with him 'the bear,' destined for a college fellowship, Lord Byron had also brought up with him the sense of dignity appropriate to a nobleman of wit, whose poems had been praised in critical reviews and bought by duchesses,—at least, by 'Her Grace of Gordon,' who (as the happy youngster wrote to his fair correspondent at Southwell) 'bought my volume, admired it exceedingly, in common with the rest of the fashionable world, and wished to claim her relationship with the author.' A nobleman of wit and fashion, Lord Byron of Trinity had now only to achieve a reputation for rakishness, to be as famous as he desired. Hazard being a favourite pastime just then with the '*jeunesse dorée*' of the university, Lord Byron of Trinity seized the dice-box, and played away night after night till four in the morning. 'I have thrown as many as fourteen mains running,' he recorded at a later period in one of his journals, 'and carried off all the cash upon the table occasionally; but I had no coolness, or judgment, or calculation. It was the delight of the thing that pleased me. Upon the whole, I left off in time, without being much a winner or loser. Since one-and-twenty years of age, I played but little, and then never above a hundred, or two or three.' When a gamester prates of having 'left off in time, without being much a winner or loser,' it may be taken for certain that he did not leave off in time, or without losing much more than he won. Byron's losses at hazard were, doubtless, largely accountable for the enormity of the debts that weighed upon him and harassed him painfully, on his coming of age. '*Entre nous*,' he wrote to his always sympathetic and judicious counsellor, the Rev. Mr. Becher of Southwell, on 28th March, 1808, when only twenty years and two months old, 'I am cursedly dipped; my debts, *every* thing inclusive, will be nine or ten thousand pounds before I am twenty-one.' The twelve or fifteen hundred a-year from the Newstead property, after paying some of the charges of the long suit (still in progress) for the Rochdale property, of course could not afford the young peer a sufficient allowance for what may be called his legitimate expenses. The youngster,—continually posting in his own carriage to and fro between Cambridge and London, and between London and Southwell, keeping two riding-horses, a groom and a valet, and spending



money on three successive books of poetry,—could not live within his income of barely 1000*l.* a-year. ; *i. e.* the 500*l.* a-year allowed him by Chancey, and the 1000*l.* borrowed for his use by Mrs. Byron whilst he was at Cambridge. But to account for the 10,000*l.* of debt contracted in two years, one must suppose that Lord Byron of Trinity lost more at hazard than he cared to confess in a journal made up for his biographer's convenience.

If rumour of the high play, that went on in his rooms and in the rooms of his more reckless friends, came to the ears of the dons, it may well have made them continue to 'look askance' at the young peer, who wrote to Miss Pigot on 26th October, 1807: 'We have several parties here, and this evening a large assortment of jockeys, gamblers, boxers, authors, parsons and poets sup with me,—a precious mixture, but they go on well together; and for me, I am a *spice* of everything except a jockey.' The social gaieties of undergraduates are seldom remarkable for orderliness and freedom from noise; and it may be imagined that when the cheers and uproar of the jolly good fellows in Lord Byron's rooms broke in upon the studious hours of serious students, with no turn for jollity and no admiration for the kind of goodness that is best described in the small hours of the morning by 'three times three—and one more!' they must have wished his lordship had not 'come up' for another year. And in this feeling the dons and other grave personages of the learned society must have been confirmed by the report, which passed from gownsman to gownsman in the later days of October, that this troublesome and audacious lordling, who had sneered in verse at the Master's 'ample front sublime,' and most irreverently called the college-choir 'a set of croaking sinners,' was already at work on another satire,—and had in fact already turned off three hundred and eighty lines of the new poem, which would exhibit to public ridicule the worthiest of living men. It was thus Lord Byron's friends, and his friends' friends whispered of the poem, that would put an end to Walter Scott's popularity, and make Southey rue his rashness in becoming an author by profession. For though the 'English Bards and Scotch Reviewers' was Byron's answer to the article which did not appear in the 'Edinburgh Review' till January, 1808, and doubtless owed the greater part of its force and most vicious stabs to the anger stirred within the poet's breast by the ludicrously insufficient assault on his reputation, the groundwork of the satire was laid weeks before he received his 'early intelligence' of the rod that had been pickled for his back. Left to himself, Lord Byron of Trinity would have produced a satire, something stronger than the satirical stuff of



the 'Hours of Idleness,' something weaker than the satire of the 'Hints from Horace,' that might have caught the public attention for an hour, on its way to the oblivion that claims all satire that does not rise to a high standard of excellence. Fortunately for the poet, and no less fortunately for countless later sufferers from unjust criticism, the 'Edinburgh Review' came to his aid with an article that stung him to an exhibition of strength, that placed him, boy though he was, amongst the masters of a kind of literature, in which the young so often try to distinguish themselves, and so rarely excel.

It is not easy to sit in judgment on the notorious article, which has proved so prejudicial to the authority and influence of professional critics, without thinking of the satire which gave it enduring notoriety. And to remember the boyish daring, and malicious sportiveness and irresistible humour of the 'English Bards,' is to lose the power of regarding impartially the outrage that stirred the youngster's wrath. But when the satire is put as much as possible out of recollection, and the attention confined as strictly as possible to the failings of the 'Hours of Idleness' and the faults of the review, there is little to be urged in palliation of the intemperance and excessive harshness of the latter. When all reasonable excuses have been made for the reviewer, it remains that he was signally deficient in good feeling, good judgment, and good taste,—that this article is alike reprehensible for its want of kindliness, its want of critical discernment, and its vulgarity. In sneering at the young lord for being a young lord the reviewer at least showed a curious want of breeding. In striking a youngster so heavily, and at the same moment deriding his modest appeal for consideration on the score of his youth, the censor showed, to put the case mildly, a discreditable lack of sympathy for youthful ambition. In loftily bidding the young aspirant to 'ferthwith abandon poetry,' as a field for which he had not a single natural qualification, the critic showed a singular unfitness for his office; for though they comprised many weak verses, and several exhibitions of boyish, even childish, indiscretion and inexpertness, the poems afforded numerous indications of poetic feeling, and several passages of thoughtful and strenuous writing. Walter Scott, who had already looked through the poems, might well be astonished at the 'undue severity' of the 'offensive article,' which caused him to protest to Jeffrey against its scandalous harshness, and even to think of writing a note of sympathy and consolation to the author. And Scott was not the only reader of 'The Edinburgh' to regard with equal surprise and disapproval its treatment of a book of poems, which 'contained

some passages of noble promise,' though 'they were written like all juvenile poetry, rather from the recollection of what had pleased the author in others than what had been suggested by his own imagination.'

It still remains a question with many persons whether Jeffrey or Brougham wrote this unfortunate review; it being assumed by the questioners that the article proceeded from the pen of the one or the other. As it rests on the assumption, that, if the article had not been of his own writing, he would, sooner or later, have disassociated himself from the discreditable performance by revealing the real blunderer or at least disclaiming the authorship of the essay, the case against Jeffrey is so weak that it should not injure his reputation. Jeffrey had his failings; but he was not the man to betray a coadjutor, or sneak out of an editorial scrape under cover of an undignified avowal. Moreover, if Medwin's book may be trusted (and on such a matter the 'Conversations' are trustworthy in some degree), Jeffrey disclaimed the authorship in so far as he could do so with dignity, by assuring Byron in confidence that though responsible for the deed he was not its doer. That Jeffrey ever promised (in the manner alleged in the 'Conversations') to put Byron in the way to discover his aggressor is more than improbable. The case against Jeffrey must be allowed to perish. Discredited by various circumstances, the notion that Brougham wrote the article is nothing more than a suspicion, hugged to the last by Byron who, with several good reasons for hating the lawyer, was not unwilling to strengthen them with a poor one. 'I have no loves,' Byron said to Trelawny, as they were sailing to Cephalonia, 'I have only one friend, my sister Augusta, and I have reduced my hates to two—that venomous reptile Brougham, and Southey the apostate.' The poet's opinion that the review proceeded from the venomous reptile, because it contained some legal jargon about 'minority pleas,' 'plaintiffs' and 'grounds of action,' was mere childishness. If Brougham wrote the offensive stuff, he wrote it when he was half asleep. It is possible the article—so unworthy of 'The Edinburgh,' and so significantly different in tone and style from the acknowledged compositions of the 'Review's' principal and regular writers—was the production of an occasional contributor who, as a resident member of the University of Cambridge, seized a tempting opportunity for administering a seasonable chastisement to the young satirist of college tutors. The 'dons,' who looked askance at Lord Byron of Trinity before the long vacation, may well have come to a strong and unanimous opinion in the ensuing November that the young nobleman's presence at the



university was neither for his own advantage, nor the good of the young gentlemen who gathered about him. On hearing of the 'new satire' already on the stocks, the tutors may well have wished for some one, enjoying the confidence of a powerful editor, to give his lordship a lesson in the art of saying unpleasant things of one's neighbours, and to show him with equal promptitude and energy that satire, like stone-throwing, was a game at which two persons could play,—a game in which no one should be allowed to have all the play to himself. And as this view of what would be best for Lord Byron of Trinity and also for his academic superiors grew more general and strong, at the high-tables of the colleges, it would naturally occur to any one of the Fellows, who had friendly relations with the Edinburgh editor, that he would do a good turn to his university and more especially to its junior members, by paying Lord Byron off in his own coin, and showing all undergraduates of a froward and malapert temper that even a young peer of the realm could not ridicule 'dons' and other duly constituted authorities with impunity. Whilst all this appears alike natural and probable, the tone and very structure of the article point to the same conclusion. Written throughout in a vein of supercilious 'donnishness,' the review reminds one alternately of a college-tutor who regards sarcasm as the most effective vehicle of instruction, and of a schoolmaster who more in sorrow than in anger condescends to chastise a naughty boy with an implement of torture, far larger and more terrifying than the author's goose-quill. After administering the flagellation to the last cut, the pedagogue forbears to dismiss the humiliated culprit till he has pointed the moral of the incident, for the edification of youthful listeners, by reading aloud some of the weakest verses of his never felicitous satire on academic persons and practices. With this cue to the possible origin and purpose of the review, which caused the poet to drink three bottles of claret at a single sitting, most readers of its insolent phrases will perhaps be inclined to think with the present writer that, though the blow was delivered from Edinburgh, the impulse of the blow came from Cambridge.

If the offensive article proceeded from a Cambridge tutor, chiefly desirous of driving Lord Byron from Trinity before the summer terms, the reviewer had reason for a brief while to congratulate himself on the success of his essay. In London where he hastened from his punishment to his claret, Lord Byron was in no humour to pass another term at Cambridge, where for the moment the laughter was all on the side of the reviewer and the dons. The poet, who in later time could not endure with calm-



ness the speechless obloquy of London drawing-rooms, had not the heart to face the Master and Fellows who, instead of merely eyeing him askance as they passed him in Hall or Quadrangle, were now prepared to confront him with faces brightened with smiles of triumphant malice. So far as his university career is concerned, the 'Edinburgh Review' snuffed out the poet, who had meant to stay on at Trinity till the following Midsummer. From the date of that number of the 'Edinburgh Review,' Lord Byron ceased to be Lord Byron of Trinity. He 'went up' indeed to take his degree in 1808; but having taken his grade amongst the graduates, he withdrew immediately from the university, to nurse his wrath and bitterness in London and at Newstead,—till he should find verse for their adequate expression.

Referring to his wilder time at Trinity, towards the close of his time on earth, Byron said to Medwin, 'I had a great hatred of College rules, and contempt for academical honours. How many of their wranglers have ever distinguished themselves in the world? . . . I believe they were as glad to get rid of me at Cambridge, as they were at Harrow.' Though they come to us through a no more reliable reporter than Medwin, it can be readily believed that Byron spoke these words, and that they fairly represent the feeling of the Trinity tutors, in finding themselves well rid of so troublesome an inmate of their College.

But though his time at Cambridge ended thus abruptly and ingloriously, Byron bore his university no ill-will. On the contrary, in the darker periods, and also in the brighter periods, of his life he held *Alma Mater* in tender recollection, thanking her in his affectionate heart for the friends she had given him. Towards the close of October 1811, little more than three months after his return from the East, he roused himself from the sorrow of the preceding weeks, and went to Cambridge to pass a few days with Hodgson. Four months later, when he and Hobhouse were thinking of running from London to Cambridge, to look round the old familiar haunts and exchange greetings with the few of their former friends, still lingering in them, the poet—now in the morning of his fame—wrote sadly to Hodgson, 'Cambridge will bring sad recollections to him, and worse to me, though for very different reasons. I believe the only human being that ever loved me in truth and entirely was of, or belonging to Cambridge, and, in that, no change can now take place.' And whilst Byron loved the university which he left at the moment of his discord with her chiefs, even as he loved the school which he quitted under somewhat similar circumstances, the younger Cantabs were quick and the older Cantabs by no

means slow, to hail him as one of the brightest ornaments of their seat of learning. When Byron went to Cambridge in October 1814 to vote for Mr. Clarke, the Trinity candidate for Sir Busick Harwood's Professorship, his appearance in the Senate House was the occasion of an outburst of applause from the undergraduates, that brought tears of joy to his strangely lustrous eyes and the crimson of sudden gladness to his pale face. And just upon thirty years later, Trinity College conferred honour on herself and rendered meet homage to the poet, as one of her own great sons of genius, by placing in her library the statue by Thorwaldsen, which would not have found a fitter or more honourable home had it been admitted to Westminster Abbey.

## CHAPTER X.

### CAMBRIDGE VACATIONS.

In London—'The Noble Art of Self-defence'—Swimming in the Thames—Byron's Life at Southwell—His Quarrels with his Mother—Harrowgate—First and Second Editions of *The Southwell Poems*—'The Prayer of Nature'—Byron's Scepticism—His Height and Fatness—Starvation and Physic—Their Results—Tobacco and Laudanum.

WHILST keeping his terms at Cambridge, first as a shy, retiring undergraduate, then as a lad of lively humour and sociable disposition, and lastly as one of the most hilarious and unruly men of his year at Trinity, Lord Byron enlarged his knowledge of human nature and human manners by visits to London, where he saw life much as Tom and Jerry saw it, from points of view best known to gentlemen about town, and sometimes with companions whose society was not calculated to inspire him with a generous admiration of his species. Not that he had a morbid preference for unworthy associates, or a keen appetite for any of the grosser vices. On the contrary, eating less than a squeamish school-girl, and seldom drinking more wine than he could carry with composure on his naturally unsteady feet, he found his chief daily enjoyment in reading the best poets and in writing such poetry as may be found in the 'Hours of Idleness.' But though his favourite drink was soda-water, in days when sottishness ranked with the fine arts and it was a point of honour with nine out of every ten Englishmen to fuddle themselves with strong wines and stronger spirits at least once in every four-and-twenty hours, Lord Byron went

about town with merry fellows who, instead of emulating their friend's abstemiousness, bantered him on not caring to 'drink like a lord.' In their wanderings about town—wanderings made almost wholly upon wheels, on account of the poet's inability to walk far and freely—Lord Byron and his friends went of course to the theatres, and afterwards to places where the play was high or the dancing wild, and doubtless to other places into which the readers of this page would not care to follow them. In simple truth, they went about and saw life, as young gentlemen of all the social grades, from peers to law students, were expected and even admonished by their fathers to go about and see it, in the earlier decades of a century that has grown more virtuous and much more decorous, as it has grown in years. One of the circles they often attended was the gathering of fops and dandies to be found every afternoon at Jackson's (Angelo and Jackson's) School of the Noble Art of Self-Defence.

The friend and correspondent of royal princes, and of dukes, who without being of royal degree, were august personages, Mr. Jackson had too many lords on his visiting list to feel himself greatly honoured by the civilities lavished upon him by the nobleman from Trinity College. But the great Professor of Pugilism had too genuine and warm an admiration for 'pluck' and 'bottom,' whenever they came under his observation, not to be touched to the heart by the spirit and address with which the lame peer (who was said to write as fine poetry as 'any man who did it for a living') handled the gloves—striking out from the shoulder, and 'coming up' on his tottering pins for round after round with the best 'millers' of the school, till he was forced to give in from the unendurable pain that came to his right foot from the violent exercise. And in truth, for a beholder to be stirred with generous emotion at so pathetic an exhibition of courage and resoluteness it was not needful for him to be either a professor or connoisseur of 'the noble art.'

Byron, still in his minority, and Jackson, still at the highest point of his professional eminence, became close friends; and for a while Eddleston, if the gentle youth was capable of jealousy, must have been troubled to see how much the young lord, who delighted in a chorister's affection, could also delight in a prize-fighter's friendship. When the one was in London and the other in the country, the poet and pugilist wrote letters to one another; the professor of 'the noble art' being styled 'Dear Jack' by his noble correspondent. Jackson was one of the few greatly eminent persons to visit Byron at Newstead; and in 1808, when the poet stayed for several weeks at Brighton, the Professor made a weekly journey to the Sussex coast, for the



purpose of carrying on his young patron's pugilistic education. In the previous year (August 1807), when Leigh Hunt saw the author of the 'Hours of Idleness' swimming for a wager from Lambeth to Blackfriars Bridge, he 'noticed a respectable-looking, manly person, who was eyeing something in the distance.' The something in the distance was the poet's head, bobbing up and down, as he rehearsed the part of 'Leander' in the London river; and the 'respectable-looking, manly person' was Mr. Jackson, the prize-fighter, who took occasion to inform the bystanders who the swimmer was, and to expatiate on the virtues of his noble pupil. 'Last week,' Byron wrote to Miss Pigot on 11th August, 1807, 'I swam in the Thames from Lambeth through the two bridges, Westminster and Blackfriars, a distance, including the different turns and tacks made in the way, of three miles.'

But though he spent much of his Cambridge vacations in London, Lord Byron of Trinity passed the greater part of the successive holidays at Southwell, where he was singularly fortunate in the neighbours, with whom he associated on terms of the closest intimacy. If it was well for the poet that in his infancy he made the acquaintance of people placed only a few degrees above the poor, it was even better for him that, instead of being brought so soon in the higher world as he would have been had it not been for his mother's peculiarities and Lord Carlisle's consequent distaste for her, he was on the threshold of his manhood placed into familiar relations with persons of the gentle middle-class,—a class that is generally too little known to people of noble rank. In the drawing-rooms of the modest homes of Southwell, which he entered almost daily to sing songs and gossip with young ladies, who probably in their whole lives never exchanged words with another peer of the realm, Lord Byron learnt more of the finer qualities of human nature, and more particularly of feminine character, than he learnt a few years later in the London salons, where dames and maidens of the highest birth and fashion thronged and pressed towards him, to scan his features and catch his lightest words. It was in those country-town parlours and in the gardens on which their windows opened, that the young Byron, excluded by more benignant than cruel circumstances from the homes of his social equals, encountered men and women whose conversation weaned him from his shyness, relieved his manners of their rusticity, and taught him the art of pleasing. And it speaks no little for the refinement and efficiency of his teachers that on passing from them, after a brief interval of foreign travel, into the brightest and stateliest circles of the

English aristocracy, he was not more applauded for his genius than for his noble air and perfect breeding.

At Southwell Byron lived almost wholly with the gentry of the little town. Once in a while he received a call from a gentleman of 'the county,' or an invitation to a 'county house.' But partly from the knowledge that his pecuniary circumstances would not permit him to visit the territorial families of his ancestral shire on equal terms, and partly from a feeling that his mother would be less acceptable to the ladies of the county than to the gentlewomen of the Green, the poet declined the invitations, and sometimes omitted to return the calls,—alleging, in excuse of the incivility of such negligence, either that the calls had been too long deferred, or that the callers should have brought their womankind to see Mrs. Byron. The young man's shyness was also largely accountable for his disinclination to make the acquaintance of his county neighbours. To Mr. Becher's sensible advice that he should go more into the world, and seek friends beyond the boundaries of his mother's parish, he replied,—

'Dear Becher, you tell me to mix with mankind,—

I cannot deny such a precept is wise ;

But retirement accords with the tone of my mind,

And I will not descend to a world I despise.

'Did the Senate or Camp my exertions require,

Ambition might prompt me at once to go forth ;

And, when infancy's years of probation expire,

Perchance, I may strive to distinguish my birth.

'The fire, in the cavern of Etna concealed,

Still mantles unseen, in its secret recess ;—

At length, in a volume terrific revealed,

No torrent can quench it, no bounds can repress.

'Oh thus, the desire in my bosom for fame

Bids me live but to hope for Posterity's praise ;

Could I soar, with the Phoenix, on pinions of flame,

With him I would wish to expire in the blaze.

'For the life of a Fox, of a Chatham the death,

What censure, what danger, what woe would I brave ?

Their lives did not end when they yielded their breath,—

Their glory illumines the gloom of the grave !'

But whilst Byron's intercourse with his neighbours of the Green was alike social and salutary, the Burgage Manor-house was too often the scene of ludicrous disputes between the mother, who had not the good sense to relax the reins of maternal authority as her offspring neared the time for becoming his own master, and the son who, having never

submitted graciously to his mother's violent temper, became less tolerant of her vexatious conduct on ceasing to be a school-boy. With down darkening his lip, and with a growing sense of what was due to his dignity as a man and a peer of the realm, it was not to be expected that Lord Byron of Trinity, who had fought Dr. Butler at Harrow, would consent any longer to be rated by his mother in the hearing of her servants, as she used to rate him in his childhood. On the other hand, Mrs. Byron was resolved to forego none of the enjoyment that came to her from the exercise of the most congenial of her maternal privileges. The scandal of this state of things of course spread beyond the walls of Burgage Manor. Even if the servants of the manor-house had refrained from telling what they naturally told to all the other servants of the Green, the Pigots and Leacrofts and the other gentlefolk of the town would have known no less of the unseemly quarrels of the mother and son. For whilst Mrs. Byron hastened with tears in her eyes, after every battle, to tell her neighbours what a wretched woman she was to have so undutiful a boy, Byron—like the Byron of later time—laid his domestic troubles before the world, and entreated society to join with him in weeping over them. An equally farcical and truthful story is told of the way in which one of the Southwell apothecaries received early intelligence of a more than usually vehement combat, from which each of the two belligerents withdrew with a strong feeling that the other would commit suicide before the morning. Having good reason to think his mother violent and mad enough to do all her words implied, Byron went off to the apothecary the same night, and begged him on no account whatever to supply Mrs. Byron with the means of putting an end to herself. And the apothecary had scarcely dismissed his patron with an assurance that his wish should be respected, when he received a nocturnal visit from Mrs. Byron, who had come—not to buy poison, but to beg that no kind of deadly stuff should be sold to her son.

Soon after this comical incident, the Pigots were sitting late one evening in their drawing-room—debating possibly what would be the end of these wretched disputes—when Lord Byron came in upon them with a petition that they would give him a bed for the night, as he had resolved to go up to London in the morning, without bidding his mother farewell, and to stay away from Southwell till she had with due expressions of penitence promised to amend her faulty manners. Only a few minutes earlier a stormy altercation



between the two habitual disputants had ended in a manner that occasioned Lord Byron the less surprise, as Mrs. Byron had in former times thrown the fire-tongs at his head. On the present occasion the eccentric gentlewoman, stirred probably by 'mountain' as well as maternal indignation, had attempted to silence her adversary with the poker. Hence the young nobleman's determination to keep away from Southwell, till his mother should promise never again to have recourse to so dangerous and objectionable a form of argument.

In the morning, before Mrs. Byron had a suspicion of his purpose, Byron was well on his way towards London, having left Southwell under circumstances that caused him to write to Miss Pigot on 9th August, 1806, from his lodgings at 16 Piccadilly: 'Seriously, your mother has laid me under great obligations, and you, with the rest of your family, merit my warmest thanks for your kind connivance at my escape.' It was the fugitive's desire that his place of retreat should not be revealed to Mrs. Byron, to whom he sent word, through Miss Pigot, that should she venture to pursue him she would do so at the risk of driving him 'immediately to Portsmouth,'—a sufficiently plain hint that to avoid her, till she should have come to a proper view of her behaviour, he was prepared to go abroad. But the young man's wish was disappointed. On learning her son's address (probably through the disloyalty or indiscretion of the groom who was ordered to go to London with the peer's horses), Mrs. Byron went up to town at fullest posting speed, and in due course had an interview with him at his Piccadilly lodgings, from which she retired with a clear perception that her lame brat of a boy had passed out of her government. 'I cannot exactly say with Cæsar, "*Veni, vidi, vici*,"' the poet wrote to young Pigot,—Miss Pigot's brother, an Edinburgh medical student; 'however, the most important part of his laconic account of success applies to my present situation; for, though Mrs. Byron took the *trouble* of "*coming*" and "*seeing*," yet your humble servant remained the *victor*.' Henceforth, so far as his lamentably incompetent mother was concerned, Lord Byron of Trinity was his own master. 'The enemy,' as the conqueror undutifully styled his parent, having retired to her entrenchments in Nottinghamshire, Lord Byron with his servant and horses made a trip to Worthing and Littlehampton on the Sussex coast; whence he returned in two or three weeks' time 'with all the honours of successful war' to Southwell, for a brief visit of courtesy to the vanquished 'enemy,' before he set out for Harrowgate, with young Pigot for his companion.

At Harrowgate—whither they posted in his lordship's carriage,

and were preceded by his lordship's saddle-horses—the young men found little diversion in the gaieties of an unusually 'gay season.' Whilst the student was thinking more of his Edinburgh studies than of the amusements of the water-drinkers, the poet thought chiefly of his verses when he was not playing with his big dogs. 'Harrowgate,' Mr. Pigot wrote to his sister at Southwell, 'is still extremely full; Wednesday (to-day) is our ball-night, and I meditate going into the room for an hour, although I am by no means fond of strange faces. Lord B., you know, is even more shy than myself.' Twenty years later, on being asked for particulars of the visit that might be serviceable to the poet's authorised biographer, Dr. Pigot wrote, 'We were at the Crown Inn, at Low Harrowgate. We always dined in the public room, but retired very soon after dinner to our private one; for Byron was no more a friend to drinking than myself. We lived retired, and made few acquaintances; for he was naturally shy, *very* shy, which people who did not know him mistook for pride.'

On their homeward journey from the Yorkshire springs, whilst his friend maintained the silence that was asked of him, Byron—as the post-horses covered the distance between Chesterfield and Mansfield—'spun the prologue for our play' (published in the 'Hours of Idleness'), that was delivered in due course at the dramatic entertainment that took place in Mr. Leacroft's drawing-room towards the end of September; the entertainment at which the poet, in his delivery of the epilogue by Mr. Becher, distinguished himself, more perhaps to the surprise than the delight of some of the audience, by an exhibition of the talent for mimicry that in later time enabled him to play the part of a racy and irresistibly comic *raconteur*.

Towards the close of November, copies of the volume of poems, which the young man had been seeing through the press during the summer and autumn of 1806, were sent to Mr. Becher of Southwell and Mr. Pigot at Edinburgh; but these copies had no sooner passed from his possession, than the author was induced to burn all the remaining volumes of the edition, by Mr. Becher's equally prompt and judicious expression of his opinion that the sixteen stanzas 'to Mary' were disagreeably animated with the spirit of Little's amatory verses. That the clergyman had good reason for the protest may be ascertained by a perusal of the single extant copy of the poem; but the justice of the censure detracts in no degree from the praise due to the poet for the graceful docility and good temper with which he accepted it. Had he declined to profit by the good counsel, and laughing at his friend's squeamishness persisted in sending out

the books on which he had expended so much care, Byron would only have acted like a youngster of ordinary wilfulness and self-sufficiency. But in yielding so readily to the clergyman, whose judgment he respected and whose affection he valued, Byron at least justified Dr. Drury's testimony to his manageableness, and showed that, however quick he might be to pull against the cable of harsh and tyrannical government, he was still to be led by the silken thread of wise and sympathetic authority. In truth his behaviour in a matter, so likely to provoke the pride and obstinacy of youthful nature, is no slight evidence that his insubordination to Drury's successor was more due to the master's want of tact than the pupil's want of temper, and that the Cambridge 'dons' would have found him less unruly if they had been better qualified to govern him. That the young man's submission to Mr. Becher's judgment involved a considerable sacrifice of his inclination appears from the quickness with which he brought out the second collection of verses for the amusements of his friends, and for the gratification of his eager appetite for the distinction of 'being an author.'

The proofs of this second volume of poems, printed for private circulation, were undergoing revision, when Byron, still in his nineteenth year, wrote 'The Prayer of Nature,'—a composition that shows with interesting clearness the character and limits of the religious scepticism, which made the young poet an object of mingled terror and pity to many, perhaps the majority, of his acquaintance :—

### THE PRAYER OF NATURE.

- 'Father of Light ! great God of Heaven !  
Hear'st Thou the accents of despair ?  
Can guilt like man's be e'er forgiven ?  
Can vice atone for crimes by prayer ?
- 'Father of Light, on Thee I call !  
Thou see'st my soul is dark within ;  
Thou who canst mark the sparrow's fall,  
Avert from me the death of sin.
- 'No shrine I seek, to sects unknown ;  
Oh point to me the path of truth !  
Thy dread omnipotence I own ;  
Spare, yet amend, the faults of youth.
- 'Let bigots rear a gloomy fane,  
Let superstition hail the pile,  
Let priests, to spread their sable reign,  
With tales of mystic rites beguile.
- 'Shall man confine his Maker's sway  
To Gothic domes of mouldering stone ?  
Thy temple is the face of day ;  
Earth, ocean, heaven Thy boundless throne.



- ‘ Shall man condemn his race to hell  
 Unless they bend in pompous form ;  
 Tell us that all, for one who fell,  
 Must perish in the mingling storm ?
- ‘ Shall each pretend to reach the skies,  
 Yet doom his brother to expire,  
 Whose soul a different hope supplies,  
 Or doctrines less severe inspire ?
- ‘ Shall these, by creeds they can’t expound,  
 Prepare a fancied bliss or woe ?  
 Shall reptiles, grovelling on the ground,  
 Their great Creator’s purpose know ?
- ‘ Shall those, who live for self alone,  
 Whose years float on in daily crime—  
 Shall they by Faith for guilt atone,  
 And live beyond the bounds of Time ?
- ‘ Father ! no prophet’s laws I seek,—  
*Thy* laws in Nature’s works appear ;—  
 I own myself corrupt and weak,  
 Yet will I pray, for Thou wilt hear !
- ‘ Thou, who canst guide the wandering star  
 Through trackless realms of Ether’s space ;  
 Who calm’st the elemental war,  
 Whose hand from pole to pole I trace :
- ‘ Thou, who in wisdom placed me here,  
 Who, when Thou wilt, can take me hence,  
 Ah ! whilst I tread this earthy sphere,  
 Extend to me Thy wide defence.
- ‘ To Thee, my God, to Thee I call !  
 Whatever weal or woe betide,  
 By Thy command I rise or fall,  
 In Thy protection I confide.
- ‘ If, when this dust to dust restored,  
 My soul shall float on airy wing,  
 How shall Thy glorious name adored,  
 Inspire her feeble voice to sing !
- ‘ But, if this fleeting spirit share  
 With clay the grave’s eternal bed,  
 While life yet throbs, I raise my prayer,  
 Though doom’d no more to quit the dead.
- ‘ To Thee I breathe my humble strain,  
 Grateful for all Thy mercies past,  
 And hope, my God, to Thee again  
 This erring life may fly at last.’

In the following year (1807), at a time when he was anticipating speedy death, Byron in his twentieth year wrote,

- ‘ Forget this world, my restless sprite,  
 Turn, turn thy thoughts to Heav’n ;  
 There must thou soon direct thy flight,  
 If errors are forgiven.

To bigots and to sects unknown,  
 Bow down beneath the Almighty's throne :—  
 To Him address thy trembling prayer ;  
 He, who is merciful and just,  
 Will not reject a child of dust,  
 Although his meanest care.  
 ' Father of Light ! to Thee I call,  
 My soul is dark within ;  
 Thou, who canst mark the sparrow's fall,  
 Avert the death of sin.  
 Thou, who canst guide the wandering star,  
 Who calm'st the elemental war,  
 Whose mantle is yon boundless sky,  
 My thoughts, my words, my crimes forgive ;  
 And, since I soon must cease to live,  
 Instruct me how to die.'

Had it been composed a few months later, when Byron was living under the influence of Charles Skinner Matthews, 'The Prayer of Nature' would probably have contained more to shock orthodox readers. Written in the Christmas-tide of 1806, the poem gave utterance to a scepticism that differed in no important particular from the religious opinions he professed less precisely at Harrow, where he fought Lord Calthorpe for accusing him of atheism. Exhibiting abundant faith in the existence of a personal Deity, vigilant of the actions and attentive to the prayers of human beings, and showing no disposition to question the doctrine of man's personal existence after death, the Prayer, in its heterodoxy, is but a cry of revolt against certain of the doctrines imposed on the writer's mind in its infancy ;—doctrines that had become intolerable to a mind so sensitive and imaginative. Differing from the infidelity of Hume and Gibbon and Voltaire, with whose writings he had already a slight acquaintance, almost as widely as it differs from the devout unbelief of Darwin, this scepticism, whose single aim is to escape from agonizing imaginations, has little in common with the cold doubt of the philosophic thinkers of the poet's own period, and scarcely anything at all with the free-thought of recent scientific inquirers. And it will be seen by-and-by that these remarks are not more applicable to Byron's infidelity in its earlier than to his infidelity in its later exhibitions.

The scepticism of 'Childe Harold' differs notably from the scepticism of 'The Prayer of Nature ;' the scepticism of the second instalment of the poet's first great poem is in many particulars out of harmony with the scepticism of the earlier cantos ; and the bolder and cynical scepticism of 'Don Juan' is in several respects strangely unlike the scepticism of the 'Pilgrimage.' Although Shelley believed himself incapable of

influencing his friend in respect to religious questions, the man who had held daily communion with so fearless and subtle a reasoner was other than the Byron who loitered with so sober and matter-of-fact a scholar as Hobhouse through the ruins of ancient Athens. In like manner the pilgrim of the Eastern tour, with Hobhouse at his elbow, was other than the Byron who delighted at Cambridge and Newstead to talk with Charles Skinner Matthews on the mysteries of existence and the perplexities of faith. And the Byron with whom Matthews talked, was other than the Byron who in 1806 wrote 'The Prayer of Nature.' But in all the variations of his unbelief, Byron is always the sceptic of emotion,—never the cold and calmly speculative free-thinker. More referable to the feminine than the masculine forces of his nature, his scepticism is an affair of sensibility and passion, instead of logic and conviction. Whether he rails in boyish verse at 'priests' and 'bigots,' or in a loftier strain compassionates the 'poor child of doubt and death, whose hope is built on reeds,' or exclaims with cynical vehemence,

'For me, I know nought ; nothing I deny,  
Admit, reject, condemn ; and what know *you*,  
Except perhaps that you were born to die ?  
And both may after all turn out untrue ;'

he is the sceptic of feeling and excitement, whose profoundest reasonings are familiar arguments of 'common-sense,' and whose confidence in his own conclusions sinks as his pulse subsides. Begotten of anxiety for himself and sympathy for human kind,—the selfish fear being far less powerful in his generous breast than the concern for others,—this feverish, impulsive, timorous scepticism was fruitful of repudiations of unendurable dogmas ; but every repudiation was attended by an uneasy feeling that the rejected doctrine might in the end prove a true one. In the agitation which followed his death, people perplexed themselves with the question, whether he had in his later time been a Christian ? Answering this question in a way that left the question unanswered, Leigh Hunt remarked, 'He was a Christian by education : he was an infidel by reading. He was a Christian by habit : he was no Christian upon reflection.' But Byron, with his keen sensitiveness and strong memory, was so constituted that his later reading (never severe) could not altogether overcome the influence of early education. Shelley was less powerful over him than May Gray. Hovering and oscillating, even in the periods of his boldest scepticism, between Christianity and disbelief, he never after his boyhood rested either on the one or the other. There were moments when he could speak and write as though he had passed altogether



from his early faith; but to the last he was an anxious and hesitating unbeliever, and the religious opinions of the man, who in Italy and Greece was an habitual reader of the Bible given him by his sister on the eve of his withdrawal from England, resembled the religious opinions of the boy who wrote 'The Prayer of Nature.'

The period of the production of this religious poem was also the time at which the young man first set himself earnestly to combat the tendency to corpulence of which Moore speaks so daintily. It was no mere disposition to inconvenient stoutness, but a burdensome and disfiguring grossness of which Byron resolved to rid himself at the commencement of his twentieth year; and as he has been unfairly ridiculed and persistently exhibited to contempt for the vanity, which caused him to sacrifice bodily health to personal appearance, it is but fair to display in all its repulsiveness the extravagance of the disease that made him employ such violent measures for its abatement. The matter is the more deserving of consideration, because the regimen, in which he persisted with a resoluteness and perseverance that may almost be called heroic, affected his temper and happiness, his character and even his genius.

So long as he continued to grow in stature, this vicious habit of body was fruitful of no serious inconvenience. Nor was it attended with humiliating and embittering results. But as soon as he ceased to grow higher, the youth who had been a thick-bodied, heavy-featured lad, expanded with fat till he became ludicrous and repulsive to beholders,—especially to those beholders, the young and lovely of the gentler sex, of whose approval he was most keenly desirous. Let it be remembered that on attaining its full measure his stature barely escaped shortness. It was his humour and weakness to maintain that he stood five feet and eight *and a half* inches high. In questions of height, it may be laid down as a sure maxim that the man who claims credit for the extra half-inch, claims credit for what he does not possess. In his boots Byron stood a trifle over five feet eight inches; but this was the height of a man—standing on his toes, with heels raised by boots of peculiar make. His actual height was midway between five feet seven inches and five feet eight inches. And on the nineteenth anniversary of his birthday this young man of barely average height weighed fourteen stone and six pounds. Of this burden of flesh more than an average proportion pertained to the trunk and superior limbs, as his inability to take much walking exercise was unfavourable to the development of the legs. The young man, of abnormal girth and large shoulders,

tottering unsteadily on spindle limbs and small, distorted feet, had a face swollen to unsightliness with fatty tissue. Is it wonderful that his visage was disgusting to him? and that he resolved to mortify his keen appetite for food, to abstain from fattening drinks, to weaken himself by the daily use of drastic medicines, to quicken his skin's action with hot baths, and to deny himself several of the most important pleasures of sense, in order to escape such hideous disfigurement and to look like other young men? Surely it was more honourable than contemptible in him that he could make such a daily and hourly sacrifice of bodily indulgence and delights for which he had keen zest, in order to emerge from such a swinish state of physical depravity? It is best for a man to be natural in his habits and outward show. But when a man cannot be natural without looking like a hog, he does well to be unnatural for the sake of looking like a man. Let it be granted that the motive was vanity, and that vanity is no heroic quality,—albeit, a quality that is seldom wanting in heroes, and often contributes not a little to their heroism. Still the fact remains that, his only choice lying between the part of a pig and the part of a peacock, it is creditable to him that he declined the part of the pig.

In the April of 1807, he wrote from Southwell to his friend Pigot at Edinburgh, 'Since we met, I have reduced myself by violent exercise, much physic, and hot bathing, from fourteen stone six pounds to twelve stone seven pounds. In all I have lost twenty-seven pounds. Bravo!' On going up to Cambridge he was so changed in shape and show that even his familiars of Trinity did not recognise him at first sight. 'I was obliged,' he wrote to Miss Pigot from Cambridge on 30th June, 1807, 'to tell everybody my name, nobody having the least recollection of my visage or person.' The mild-mannered Eddleston was 'thunderstruck' at the change in his patron. A fortnight later the poet wrote to Miss Pigot from London, 'Though I am sorry to say it, it seems to be the mode amongst *gentlemen* to grow *fat*, and I am told I am at least fourteen pounds below the fashion. However, I decrease instead of enlarging, which is extraordinary, as violent *exercise* in London is impracticable.' Violent exercise, however, can at no time have been a chief factor of the regimen, which owed most of its efficacy to starvation, Epsom salts, and the sweating bath. Such exercise as he could take, he took. In the summer and in the cold seasons he swam for long distances daily; but that is no exercise for the reduction of fat. He was daily for hours in the saddle; but as soon as the muscles, which it



affects especially, have accommodated themselves to the strain, horse exercise ceases to be either a violent or a reducing exercise. Were it a remedy for grossness of bodily habit, one would not see so many pot-bellied troopers, and hunting-men who ride sixteen stone. At Cambridge in these later days such a man, if he could bring himself to sacrifice the beauty of his hands, would sweat the fat from his ribs in an out-rigger, and Byron, with his broad shoulders, muscular neck and thewy arms, would have been a superb oarsman, and led the Cam in a sport where his lameness would have put him at no disadvantage. But in Byron's days at Trinity, the Cam knew nothing about eight-oars, and four-oars, and sculling matches. The only violent exercise to be of much service to him in his war against fat was long-continued exercise on foot;—and that exercise was impossible to him. He could rush about for a few minutes at a time in Jackson's boxing-room; but he could maintain the exertion only for short spurts, and at the cost of intense pain.

For the sacrifices, which he made for the attainment of his object, Byron was repaid nobly. He submitted to starvation and physic, in order to escape loathsome unsightliness; and besides relieving him of the repulsive aspect, the regimen—to his astonishment and delight—endowed him with the beauty of loveliness; beauty that became proverbial. No longer big and puffy, his eyelids and cheeks became fine, and firm, and delicate, with curves as clear in outline as the curves of sculpture. Ceasing to be thick and heavy, his lips and chin assumed the peculiar sweetness and softness, that made him in the lower part of his countenance a bewitchingly charming woman rather than a handsome man. The nose—even in his comeliest period something too broad, and having (as Leigh Hunt spitefully remarked) the appearance of having been put upon the face, instead of coming out from it—was relieved of its clumsiness, and refined into harmony with the rest of a profile singularly suggestive of high breeding. At the same time the blue-gray eyes, fringed with dark (almost black) lashes, acquired a brightness and subtlety of expression that had never before distinguished them. His complexion was purified to transparency, and his auburn hair, playing over his brow in short, feathery curls, became richly lustrous. The man, who with the fine touch of a delicate and naturally sensitive hand takes in his fingers a lock of Byron's hair for the first time, experiences a curious surprise from the feather-like softness of the filaments.

Thus much starvation and medicine did for the aspect of his



face. The transformation of his figure was no less striking,—a body of grace and dignified elegance being substituted for a body of almost loutish clumsiness. At the same time, the regimen was even more beneficent to his sensations than to his appearance. Relieved of the burden of his superfluous flesh, he could walk with comparative ease and security. The body, that had oppressed him, was no longer unwieldy and unmanageable. Obeying his will, it filled him with delight. And what is even more noteworthy than all the other results of the regimen taken together, is that this discipline of starvation and drastic depletives quickened his brain to such a degree, that the man of intellect for the first time knew himself to be something far higher than a man of mere intellect. The goads and whips of the regimen had affected the nervous system, so that he had become a man of genius. He had gone to drugs and starvation at the instigation of personal vanity. Henceforth he persisted in using them for the sake of the delights of that highest life, to which they had raised him, and from which he soon sunk surely and quickly without their assistance.

It is not difficult to show how it was that starvation and medicine affected Byron in so remarkable a manner. Though he may not be aware of the process by which it operates for his immediate gratification and ultimate injury, the absinthe-drinker takes his pernicious beverage for the sake of the mechanical irritation it causes to the lining membrane and nerves of the stomach, and the consequent sympathetic excitement of the brain. Byron with Epsom salts and starvation did for his stomach and brain what the absinthe-drinker accomplishes by means of the essence of wormwood. He kept the mucous membrane of the stomach in constant irritation, and the nerves of the stomach in constant and abnormal activity, the immediate effect of their excitation being a sympathetic action of the brain, alike agreeable to his whole nervous system and conducive to mental sprightliness. The state to which he thus brought himself was attended with the pleasurable sensations of intoxication, and indeed differed chiefly from vinous exhilaration in being followed by no serious depression. ‘A dose of salts,’ Byron remarks in one of his journals, ‘has the effect of a temporary inebriation, like light champagne, upon me.’ Wine made him gloomy and savage, as soon as the momentary exhilaration had passed; the irritation of the medicine affected his brain as alcohol affects men whose nerves suffer no painful consequences from it. And to the last, starvation and medicine operated in the same way on his mental forces. ‘By starving his body,’ says Trelawny, speaking from his observation of the poet in his

closing years, 'Byron kept his brains clear : no man had brighter eyes or a clearer voice.'

The sacrifices, which Byron thus made for quickness of brain and freedom from bodily grossness, were too heavy and grievous to be made daily throughout successive years, without reluctance and with no occasional relaxations of the stern discipline. But as soon as he wavered in this ascetic course, so far as to eat and drink like other men, he began to fatten and (in his earlier manhood) wax dull ; and it was only by returning to the severe regimen that he could recover his vigour and intellectual brightness. What it cost him in discomfort and effort thus 'to clap the muzzle on his jaws' (to use his own words), 'and like the hybernating animals consume his own fat,' he alone knew. He spent the great part of his manly time under the goads of keen hunger, living for days together on biscuits and soda-water, till overcome by gnawing famine he would swallow a huge mess of potatoes, rice and fish, drenched with vinegar, and after recovering from the indigestion occasioned by such fare would go in for another term of qualified starvation. Fortunately for the man who was constrained to take this ascetic course, the desire for food was not sharpened by an epicurean yearning for delicate flavours. Like Walter Scott, Byron had a strangely insensitive palate. Sir Walter preferred whisky to wine, and could not distinguish one kind of claret from another ; and Byron thought no dinner of the rarest viands could surpass a meal of poached eggs and bacon and bottled beer.

In other matters besides food he was strangely abstinent. From a few boastful passages of his journals, it might be thought that Byron's practice was to drink freely. But the evidence is conclusive that, whilst his excesses in wine were rare and exceptional incidents even in his times of indulgence, his usual moderation in alcohol would be thought exemplary even in these days when sobriety is the fashion. The gin-and-water, of which he spoke whimsically as the source of the wit of 'Don Juan,' was a single glass of weak—sometimes very weak—toddy on nights of unusual weariness and exhaustion. Once in a long while he smoked a cigar, to see if he liked it ; but at no time was he 'a smoker.' Drinking laudanum, he used also (at times) to chew tobacco, to stay the pain of hunger biting at his vitals. In Italy he was often seen with his tobacco-box in his hand and a quid in his mouth. But all through life, from Southwell to Missolonghi (with the exception of *two* exceptional periods of excess), his rule in regard to meat and alcohol was to 'live low' that he might 'think high.' 'The regimen' of starvation and physic answered well for a time, but ill in the

long run, like absinthe-drinking, which, operating pleasantly for a time, results in ruined stomach, shattered nerves, and all the distresses of mind and body that attend failure of the digestive powers and the nervous forces.

For some months in 1816—the months of his heaviest domestic troubles—he took brandy in excess, and was at the same time a laudanum-drinker. And at Venice—during his period of depravation—he was for several months even sottish in his use of spirits. But these passages of intemperance contrast strongly with the temperance for which he was at other times remarkable. His most vicious and baneful habit in the way of drinking was the use of laudanum. The abundant evidence of his journals and letters that it was his practice to consume opium in this form, is not the only extant evidence that, like De Quincey and Coleridge and several other chiefs of our nineteenth-century literature, he was so much addicted to laudanum, that he may without exaggeration be said to have been a laudanum-drinker.

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## CHAPTER XI.

### PEER AND PILGRIM.

The Rochdale Property—Brompton and Brighton—‘Brother Gordon’—Life at Newstead—The ‘Coming of Age’—Byron’s Quarrel with the Earl of Carlisle—Missing Evidence—The House of Lords—‘English Bards and Scotch Reviewers’—Neither Whig nor Tory—The ‘Pilgrimage’—Homeward Bound.

WHILST he was spending money during his minority at the rate of five or six thousand a-year, Byron looked to the Rochdale property to pay his debts, put the Newstead mansion in habitable condition, and still give him ten, twenty, thirty, or forty thousand pounds, to begin housekeeping with in the seat of his forefathers. Whenever he meditated gloomily on his growing embarrassments, Rochdale with its coal was the mine of wealth that, on the termination of the Chancery suit next year, or at the furthest two years hence, would free him from his little difficulties, enable him to dismiss the money-lenders, and put him in easy circumstances. His notions of the value of this charming property were elastic; its worth growing with the difficulties it was to dissipate. In August 1806, immediately



after a favourable finding at Lancaster Assizes, the property was worth 30,000*l.*; in February 1807, the value of the estate had risen to 60,000*l.* Fourteen years later, when the young lord's hair was beginning to turn gray, he said to Medwin, 'The Lancashire property was hampered with a lawsuit, which has cost me 14,000*l.*, and is not yet finished.'

The Rochdale property may therefore be left out of the calculation, when the reader is considering his lordship's sources of income from the attainment of his majority till his residence at Pisa, when Medwin made his acquaintance. On coming of age, the poet was more than 10,000*l.* in debt, whilst his income from Newstead—his sole revenue—was less than 1500*l.* a-year. It was however in his power to sell Newstead,—the picturesque property for which he was offered a few years later 140,000*l.* by a gentleman who forfeited 25,000*l.* on his failure to complete the purchase, and which was eventually sold for 94,000*l.*

Mr. Hanson (the poet's solicitor) told his client, that he should not think of selling the Rochdale property, which, pending the litigation, would not bring in a good price, but should lose no time in parting with Newstead, where he could not live in any style whatever. But the young peer would not entertain, still less act upon the judicious advice. His honour was concerned in keeping Newstead; and for once he and his mother were of one mind. Mrs. Byron was longing to move from Southwell to the Abbey. Her son also was pining to dwell in his ancestral halls. And in his desire to live there, he was so imprudent as to repair some rooms of the dilapidated mansion at a considerable expense, and then to furnish them at great charge (on credit) of 1500*l.* when he was still in his minority. Taking up his abode at Newstead in September 1808, when he was four months under age, he spent much of his time there till the June of the next year, when he started for Greece. As he would not allow Mrs. Byron to live with him at the Abbey, his establishment was settled for the needs of a bachelor; but though it was fixed on a modest scale, the household, consisting of an old butler, a valet, the groom, and three or four female servants, was an establishment far beyond his means. Nearly every requisite for this establishment was obtained on credit from tradesmen, who in consideration of risk were entitled to charge their customer at high rates. The wine was sent in on credit; the coals were supplied on credit; the money needful for the young lord's current expenses was obtained from lenders at usurious interest; and soon after coming of age, his lordship borrowed of the Jews—to whom he referred long afterwards in 'Don Juan'—the considerable sum of money for the charges of

his Eastern tour, which he made in a style more in harmony with his rank than his means.

In the earlier months of 1808, before going into residence at Newstead, he had spent money freely in London on the ordinary pleasures of a young gentleman of quality; a chief cause and object of his profuseness being the girl who, living with him in lodgings at Brompton, used to ride about town with him, habited in male attire. Dressed like a boy, this person accompanied him to Brighton, where he had the folly to introduce her to his acquaintance as his 'brother Gordon'; and a few months later she was at least for a short time an inmate of Newstead. And it shows the difference in certain matters of taste and morality between English society in this year of grace and English society at the beginning of the present century, that instead of provoking loud censure by this display of his intimacy with a saucy '*fille de joie*,' young Lord Byron was thought to be amusing himself quite within the lines of permissible license, and was even commended for his address in giving an air and flavour of piquant eccentricity to an otherwise uninteresting arrangement. Instead of passing the young peer and 'his brother' on the Brighton Parade without appearing to notice them, the lady of rank and fashion, to whom Moore refers, entered freely into conversation with 'the brothers,' and was vastly amused when, in answer to a complaisant speech about the beauty of her horse, the girl in boy's clothes remarked, 'Yes, it was *gave* me by my brother.'

A still more remarkable illustration of the same difference in taste and morality between the English of to-day and the English of seventy years since is found in the affectionate interest and absolute freedom from dismay, with which the first readers of 'Childe Harold' accepted *au pied de la lettre* the poet's 'revelations' of his way of living at Newstead before he set out for his travels. It shocks the nerves to conceive what thunderbolts of reprobation would be hurled by every newspaper of the land at the young gentleman who, in a book of verse or prose having every appearance of autobiographical sincerity, should now-a-days assure the world that, in chagrin at his refusal by a young lady on whom he had set his affections, he filled his country house with loose women and well-bred *mauvais-sujets*, and spent several weeks with them in drunkenness and voluptuous enjoyments, till sated and exhausted with debauchery he came to loathe himself for his abandonment and excesses. But Byron said all this of himself in a way that caused the whole world to take his statements literally; and instead of being horrified by his evidence against himself, the



only regret of his readers was that the confessions were not more full and particular. Byron's avowals of surprise and displeasure at his readers' perverseness in taking 'Childe Harold' for himself, and in regarding the Childe's career at home and on his travels as the author's career, are merely so many laughable examples of the way in which a writer, after describing himself or his friends in a work of fiction, is always blind to his achievements in portraiture. The Childe is a young spendthrift of lineage long and glorious; the Childe has sighed in vain to the heiress of goodly lands; the Childe's ancestral hall is a vast and venerable pile, where superstition once had made her den; the Childe has a mother and a single sister; the Childe visits the same places as the author visited; to fix the Childe's personality yet more closely on himself, Byron had christened the poem 'Childe Burun,' and was not easily persuaded to substitute Harold for his own surname;—and yet, when he had taken all these pains to identify himself with the hero of the poem, the author was at a loss to understand why he was universally supposed to have been writing about himself. But the disavowals of the identity of the author and the hero do not touch the point, to which the readers of this page are asked to give their attention,—that Byron's contemporaries were universally of opinion that his doings at Newstead resembled the Childe's riotous excesses in his 'father's hall,' and that far from causing them to revolt from him or regard him with disapproval, the opinion disposed most of them to think of him with favour and even with admiration.

The comedy of the whole business is heightened by the slightness of the poet's grounds for the supersensational description of his naughty behaviour in his own house. The only 'Paphian girls . . . to sing and smile' at Newstead for the delight of a master 'sore given to revel and ungodly glee' were the cook and housemaid of the bachelor's staff of servants, and the girl whose boyish dress and horsemanship had a few weeks earlier made a stir on the Brighton cliff. Dallas indeed was so completely possessed by the fictions of the poem, as to write seriously of the considerations which determined the young lord to 'break up his harams'; but in sober prose the 'harams' of Byron's worst biographer were the young woman who cooked the poet's frugal meals, the young woman who kept his rooms tidy, and the girl from Brompton who came and went in the garb and under the name of 'brother Gordon.' The 'revellers from far and near' were three or four of the neighbouring clergy, half-a-dozen of the poet's old friends at Southwell, and his former chums at Cambridge—Matthews,



Scrope Davies, Hodgson and Hobhouse; the last of these 'heartless parasites of present cheer' being the true and trusty comrade, with whom the poet had already arranged to travel for a couple of years. Unless he had his eye on some of the Southwell folk, who may be suspected of treating him somewhat reverentially when they came to look over the Abbey, it is impossible to conceive who were the 'flatterers of the festal hour,' of whom the Childe speaks so disdainfully. For a week or two the poet thought of having 'private theatricals' in the great hall, and of inviting a lot of people to see the performances; but if he had not relinquished the project, the young lord would have been compelled to invite his tenants and their children and the villagers from Hucknall-Torkard, in order to escape the shame of playing to empty benches. For till he went abroad, he could have counted on his fingers all the persons he knew of Nottinghamshire 'county families.'

Once only was there any serious effort in the way of hospitality on a large scale. On the twenty-first anniversary of his lordship's birthday, Newstead was stirred 'by such festivities as his narrow means and society could furnish.' An ox was roasted for the farmers and their families and the humbler peasantry of the estate; and in the evening, there was something of the nature of 'a ball.' But the dance must have been a sorry affair, as Moore was unable to discover that any one of greater importance than Mr. Hanson (the solicitor) figured amongst the dancers. This ball, without ladies and gentlemen of quality, or a single carriageful of county neighbours, was in truth a dance for the farmers and servants; and it seems to have been the sole realistic foundation for the lines about 'concubines and carnal companie, and flaunting wassailers of high and low degree.'

When the poet entertained four of his Cambridge friends at his Abbey in May 1809, shortly before his departure for foreign lands, the life of the old mansion went merrily, with good stories and songs over champagne, and just the faintest possible flavour and savour of profanity in the monastic masquerades and mummery with which the young men amused themselves. Rising late from their beds, they breakfasted at noon, and whiled away five or six hours with reading, fencing, singlestick, shuttlecock, pistol-practice, riding, walking, and sailing on the lake, till the time came for the host and his guests to array themselves for dinner,—a repast that always ended with the 'loving cup' of burgundy; the wine being passed round in the big skull, which Byron had exhumed from the burial-ground of the monks of olden time, and put to

this rather profane use. At dinner Byron with exquisite humour played the part of my Lord Abbot in full abbatial costume, whilst his friends played the fool no less cleverly in their monastic dresses, with a fitting show of crosses, beads and tonsures, as monks of inferior degree. Doubtless, wild things were said and done in the small hours of the morning; but the party of five young men ('now and then increased by the presence of a neighbouring parson') dispersed after a few days of these humorous 'high jinks,' without doing anything to justify the extravagant rumours that went about the country of their impious usages and wild orgies. Men of culture and refinement, these 'heartless parasites of present cheer' may once and again have 'vexed with mirth the drowsy ear of night,' but the recollection of all their wildest pranks and extravagances would not have plunged the poet in remorse for associating so closely with such a crew of tippling reprobates. Even when he plied his pen in obedience to the stern requirements of his muse, the poet thought of them far better than he ventured to write of them.

In the absence of his few guests, whose visits were rare and brief and at considerable intervals, Byron's life at Newstead was a life of study, meditation, and strenuous labour. Pope had long been his favourite poet, and now he studied the great artist of words and malice, to extort from him the secret of his peculiar department of literary art,—to learn how to produce verse that should inflict the acutest pain on his enemies, and at the same time afford the keenest delight to the witnesses of their sufferings. He was hard at work,—working passionately and yet at the same time calmly,—on the satire that was destined to fill his foes with silent fury, and put him in the front rank of the new generation of men of letters.

On an early day of 1809, he went up to London with his satire, polished and pointed and poisoned for the press; his guardian being one of the few persons for whom it contained an expression of homage or courtesy. In the author's 'copy' the Earl was down for this compliment,

'On one alone Apollo deigns to smile,  
And crowns a new Roscommon in Carlisle.'

But when the poem came to public view, for this graceful and not undeserved couplet the poet had substituted,

'Lords too are bards, such things at times befall,  
And 'tis some praise in peers to write at all.  
Yet, did or taste or reason sway the times,  
Ah! who would take their titles with their rhymes?'

Roscommon ! Sheffield ! with your spirits fled,  
 No future laurels deck a noble head ;  
 No muse will cheer, with renovating smile,  
 The paralytic puling of Carlisle.  
 The puny schoolboy and his early lay  
 Men pardon, if his follies pass away ;  
 But who forgives the senior's ceaseless verse,  
 Whose hairs grow hoary as his rhymes grow worse ?  
 What heterogeneous honours deck the peer !  
 Lord, rhymester, petit-maitre, pamphleteer !  
 So dull in youth, so drivelling in his age,  
 His scenes alone had damn'd our sinking stage ;  
 But managers for once cried, " Hold, enough !"  
 Nor drugg'd their audience with the tragic stuff.  
 Yet at their judgment let his lordship laugh,  
 And case his volumes in congenial calf ;  
 Yes ; doff that covering, where morocco shines,  
 And hang a calf-skin on those recreant lines.'

One peculiarly offensive line of this attack would not have been penned, had the writer known that his former guardian was suffering from a nervous malady. What had happened since the beginning of the year to account for the change of feeling towards the Earl, to whom the poet was required by respect for himself, and by regard for his own action in the Dedication of the 'Hours of Idleness,' to wear at least a front of formal civility ?

On going up to town to publish his satire, Byron also went thither to take his seat in the House of Lords ; and whilst under the misconception that the etiquette of the House required that a peer on taking his seat should be introduced to the chamber by one of its members, he wrote to Lord Carlisle that he should be of age at the opening of the next parliamentary session. Instead of evoking from the Earl a cordial offer to introduce his young kinsman to the House, this letter only drew from its receiver a cold epistle of information respecting the course the poet must take in the business. The Earl's young kinsman was nettled,—construing the formal note as an intimation that the writer had no wish to be closely associated in the world's regard with the author of the 'Hours of Idleness.' This annoyance was followed quickly by a more serious vexation. On finding that in order to take his seat he would have to produce evidence of his grandfather's (Admiral Byron's) marriage with Miss Trevanion of Caerhayes in Cornwall, Byron directed his solicitor to get the needful evidence at once. But it is sometimes more difficult to obey an order than to give it. At first it was uncertain where the marriage was celebrated ; and when after some delay it was discovered that the Admiral's wedding had been solemnized in a private chapel at Caerhayes,



Byron was informed to his dismay that it was necessary to discover the record of the event. Before Lord Hardwicke's Marriage Act the records of irregular marriages, and also of regular marriages celebrated in private chapels, were kept so carelessly, that it was no uncommon thing for people to be without legal evidence of their wedlock. Till the evidence of the Admiral's marriage should be obtained, Lord Byron could not take his seat. Should the evidence be irrecoverable, he would be in a position of discredit. For the world would not believe the marriage had taken place, and Byron, so far as his peerage was concerned, would be accounted as a pretender claiming to enter the House of Lords through a sire of illegitimate birth. The case was so alarming, that the nervous, sensitive, excitable Byron, who never attained the calmness of philosophy or the *sang-froid* of patrician breeding, may be pardoned for showing extreme agitation. Whilst the hunt was going on for the missing evidence, Lord Carlisle was applied to for information about his mother's family,—information which he wouldn't give or couldn't give. To Byron's heated imagination it seemed that he was the victim of his former guardian's cynical insolence and malignity. The Earl was chuckling in his sleeve at the thought that the young man, whom he had disliked from his early boyhood, would be shut out from the House of Lords, and be degraded from the highest place of his ancient family. Thinking all this of the Earl (who doubtless would have given every information in his power to the point, though he may have declined to give information that was beside it) Byron, white with rage, seized his pen for vengeance. Hence the withdrawal of the civil couplet, and the substitution of the abusive verses. If he was altogether in the wrong, Byron could at least plead in palliation of his misbehaviour the fierce and torturing excitement caused by his painful position. That he was very much in the wrong may be inferred from the fact that his sister Augusta thought him so and had the courage to tell him so. With all her devotion to and admiration of her brother, and all her consequent readiness to humour him in matters that involved no sacred principle, the Honourable Mrs. Leigh never shrunk from telling him the truth. She had the daring of goodness, and she displayed it in opposing him when he did ill, no less than in clinging to him when he suffered ill. And in this business of the Carlisle quarrel—on which he felt so bitterly and hotly—she never ceased to tell him that he ought to make the generous *amende* to the Earl. It was long before Augusta succeeded in this point. But at length the *amende* was made nobly in the

tribute of affectionate homage to 'young gallant Howard,' with its line,—

'And partly that I did his sire some wrong,'

penned by the baffled exile, when all his kindred had turned against him, with the exception of the brave woman who demanded the atonement to the man he had wronged.

Byron was still in the first fierceness of his rage against the Earl of Carlisle, when, the evidence of the Caerhayes marriage having been obtained, he took his seat in the House of Lords on the 13th March (within a few days of the appearance of the famous satire), going thither for that purpose with his friend Dallas. Had not Dallas called on him accidentally at an opportune moment, Byron would have driven from his lodgings in St. James's Street to Westminster without a companion. It shows how completely he had lived outside the lines of his 'order' that, when Lord Carlisle failed him, there was no other peer to whom he could look to introduce him to the House. Dallas has recorded how frigidly the young peer touched the Lord Chancellor's (Eldon's) proffered hand, and how on leaving the House, he said, 'If I had shaken hands heartily, he would have set me down for one of his party—but I will have nothing to do with any of them on either side.'

At Cambridge Byron had played at being a Whig, and there can be no question that his mind and temperament qualified him for action with the more popular of the two aristocratic parties. Possibly disgust at his treatment by the 'Edinburgh' was the chief cause of his present coldness to the Whigs. Possibly he was only actuated by a prudent feeling that he had better hold aloof from both parties till he knew more of politics and of himself. Anyhow the words he spoke to Dallas on leaving the House after taking his seat accorded with words spoken by him on the same subject to other people in the earlier months of 1809. To those who sounded him as to his political sentiments and purpose just a week before his coming of age, the young peer, affecting to be neither Whig nor Tory, declared he should take time to think before espousing the cause and committing himself to the policy of either party. In his ill-humour with his former friends, there were occasions when he spoke of them as a weak army, commanded by blundering subalterns. At heart, however, on the eve of his departure for foreign lands, he was more ambitious of figuring amongst statesmen than of out-singing the poets. Nothing was further from Byron's forecast at this time than that literature would be his vocation. Dr. Drury's high opinion of his declamatory address



was influential with the young poet, who looked to public life as the arena in which, after a few years of foreign travel, he would achieve greatness.

Having entertained his Cambridge friends at Newstead in the manner set forth on previous pages, dropped a parting tear on Boatswain's grave, gathered together the portraits of his Harrow 'favourites,' signed his will, settled his mother in the Abbey mansion, shaken hands with Dr. Butler, seen his satire into a second edition, and made inadequate arrangements for remittances to foreign bankers, the young lord, whose whole income was by this time insufficient for the payment of the interest of his debts, sailed for Lisbon at the end of June 1809, with a suite of three men-servants and a wardrobe of gorgeous and costly clothing,—one of the brave habiliments being the 'scarlet coat, richly embroidered with gold, in the style of an English aide-de-camp's dress uniform,' which he wore on occasions of state, and at least once in the bazaar at Constantinople.

Leaving England in the summer of 1809, he was back again in his native land in the summer of 1811, after an absence of two years and three weeks. From Lisbon he rode on horseback through Portugal and the corner of Spain to Cadiz, whence he journeyed leisurely and luxuriously to Malta, Previsa, through Albania to Tepalsen and back to Previsa. Thence to Missolonghi, Athens, Smyrna, Constantinople, and back to Athens, where he had his head-quarters in a Franciscan convent, whilst making excursions through Attica and the Morea. With plenty of time and, during the earlier period of his travels, enough money at his disposal, he moved hither and thither by routes not easily traceable from his letters and memoranda; but the above-given names indicate with sufficient clearness his way-bills and devious wanderings till he reappeared at Malta, whence he set sail for England on the 3rd of June in the 'Volage' frigate. In these days of railroads and steamships and sure postal intercommunication, when tourists can name almost to an hour the time for their arrival at any point of their journeyings, and never need to linger for days and weeks at a single place, waiting for more money, the whole tour, with all its supplementary trips and minor excursions, seems a strangely matter-of-course and hazardless business to designate a pilgrimage. Now-a-days it would be the affair of a lawyer's long vacation, and be made at a tenth or twentieth of the money it cost this Pilgrim of the English peerage. Every month of the year young ladies by the score set out from London on travels of greater distance, interest, and adventure; and on returning to their English homes they do not look to be credited with having done something remarkable.



In these matters the world has changed greatly since Byron went on board 'the good ship, Bristol packet.' The long wars of the Napoleonic period, and the revolutionary troubles which preceded them, had disposed our great-grandfathers and great-grandmothers to prefer security and ease at home to the diversions of roaming; and the Childe's 'pilgrimage,' made though it was in the easiest and most enjoyable manner, with congenial comrades and obsequious servants, was sufficiently daring and venturesome to entitle the pilgrim of lordly condition to a modest measure of approval, even if he had not produced so fascinating a memoir of his travels.

To tell again how his intellect and fancy were quickened and delighted by the scenes he visited would be to reproduce in ordinary prose the finest passages of 'Childe Harold.' But the tour was attended with one or two incidents of biographical value to which passing reference may be made in these pages, as the poet omits to mention them in the 'Pilgrimage.' Whilst journeying from Patras in the Morea, he fired at an eaglet and brought it down on the shore of the Gulf Lepanto near Vostizza; when the brightness and beauty of its eyes filled him with pity for the wounded bird, and made him anxious to save it. 'But,' he remarks, with characteristic sensibility in his brief note of the occurrence, 'it pined and died in a few days; and I never did since, and never will, attempt the death of another bird.' At Patras, near the end of September 1810, he was struck down by a sharp though short attack of marsh-fever, the malady that assailed him so often in later years, and was no less accountable than the regimen against fatness for his premature death. And during his second stay at Athens he conceived an affection for a poor Greek boy, that resembled in vehemence and condescending benignity the friendship he hoped to renew on his return to London with Eddleston, and the friendship he had entertained for the farmer's boy at Newstead. The object of this third outbreak of affectionateness to a youth so far beneath him in rank was the Nicolo Giraud of Athens, to whom he made a handsome gift of money, on bidding him farewell at Malta, and a few months later bequeathed a legacy of 7000*l*.

Having left home with the hope of seeing Persia and India during the course of his travels, Byron, whilst staying at Athens in 1811, took measures for an excursion to Egypt; but like the schemes for visiting Persia and India, this later and less ambitious project for the extension of his wanderings was given up for want of money. Instead of the needful remittances the pilgrim received letters from England, which made him see

clearly that he must take prompt steps to satisfy his more importunate creditors, and that to satisfy them he had better sell the Rochdale coal-pits or even the Newstead ruins than go to the usurers for another large loan. Writing to his mother in February 1811, he said, 'If it is necessary to sell, sell Rochdale.' Seven months earlier he had written to the same lady, 'I trust you like Newstead, and agree with your neighbours; but you know *you* are a *vixen*,—is not that a dutiful appellation? Pray take care of my books and several boxes of papers in the hands of Joseph; and pray leave me a few bottles of champagne to drink, for I am very thirsty:—but I do not insist on the last article, without you like it.' From the 'Volage frigate,' when he hoped with a fair wind to arrive at Portsmouth on the 2nd of July, the poet wrote to Hodgson, 'Indeed, my prospects are not very pleasant. Embarrassed in my private affairs, indifferent to public, solitary without the wish to be social, with a body enfeebled by a succession of fevers, but a spirit, I trust, yet unbroken, I am returning *home* without a hope, and almost without a desire. The first thing I shall have to encounter will be a lawyer, the next a creditor, then colliers, farmers, surveyors, and all the agreeable attachments to estates out of repair, and contested coal-pits.' The *home* for which Byron sailed in this melancholy temper was the house in which there had been an execution in the previous year for the upholsterer's bill of 1500*l*. It was the home of the mother who was a vixen, with a thirst for champagne.

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## CHAPTER XII.

### 'CHILDE HAROLD.'

'Hints from Horace'—The Valley of the Shadow of Death—Melancholy Poetry—Sam Rogers's Dinner—Newstead and London—First Speech in 'The Lords'—Sudden Fame—Social Triumph—The Poet's Demeanour—The Prince Regent—The Season of 1812—Cheltenham—Pecuniary Affairs—Dissentient Voices.

RETURNING to England, with the first two Cantos of 'Childe Harold' and the 'Hints from Horace' almost ready for the press, Byron reached Portsmouth none too soon for the exigencies of his affairs, and so late that he might have been met on landing from the 'Volage' with dismal news. Young Eddleston, on whom the poet had lavished such affection as his nature would under other circumstances have expended on a younger brother,

was no more. Dead also was the poet's former schoolmate, the Honourable John Wingfield of the Guards, who had perished of fever at Coimbra, meeting a soldier's death but missing its glory. The chorister and the peer's son had died in the same month. The loss of the former touched Byron more acutely than the death of his Harrow friend, whose fate inspired the stanzas of 'Childe Harold,'—

'And thou, my friend—since unavailing woe  
 Bursts from my heart and mingles with the strain,—  
 Had the sword laid thee with the mighty low,  
 Pride had forbid e'en Friendship to complain :  
 But thus unlaurel'd to descend in vain,  
 By all forgotten, save the lonely breast,  
 And mix unbleeding with the boasted slain,  
 While Glory crowns so many a meaner crest !  
 What hadst thou done to sink so peacefully to rest !

'Oh, known the earliest, and esteem'd the most !  
 Dear to a heart where nought was left so dear !  
 Though to my hopeless days for ever lost,  
 In dreams deny me not to see thee here !  
 And Morn in secret shall renew the tear  
 Of Consciousness awaking to her woes,  
 And Fancy hover o'er thy bloodless bier,  
 Till my frail frame return to whence it rose,  
 And mourn'd and mourner lie united in repose.'

Of the spirit in which the young man of fervid but placable temper had come by this time to regard his satire and the provocation that had occasioned it, a noteworthy indication may be found in the letter he wrote Dallas, dating from the 'Volage Frigate, at sea, June 28, 1811.' 'My satire,' he said, 'it seems is in a fourth edition, a success rather above the middling run, but not much for a production which, from its topics, must be temporary, and of course be successful at first, or not at all. At this period, when I can think and act more coolly, I regret that I have written it, though I shall probably find it forgotten by all except those whom it has offended.' Twelve months later, when he was receiving civilities and expressions of their generous admiration of his genius from the very persons who had most reason to resent the satirist's wrath and injustice, this regret grew so strong that he stopped the sale of the 'English Bards' when the fifth edition was going off steadily, and took every occasion to make the *amende* to individuals whom it had outraged. Calling it one of the 'evil works of his nonage,' he wrote to Walter Scott on July 6, 1812, 'The satire was written when I was very young and very angry, and fully bent on displaying my wrath and wit, and now I am haunted by the ghosts of my wholesale assertions.'



That Byron thought more highly of the 'Hints from Horace' than of 'Childe Harold' is less perplexing than curious. When the fever of composition has subsided, it is not unusual for the writer of lively satire and fine sentiment, to prefer the smart writing that flatters him by its cleverness, to the pathetic writing that only commends him for right feeling. Moreover the adverse judgment of the first critical reader of the greater of the two works was quite enough to put so sensitive and diffident an author out of conceit with the performance, that, quickening the heart by its emotional fervour and charming the ear by language alike strenuous and musical, stirred the earliest generation of its readers to a degree not to be easily realised or accounted for at this distance of time. On the other hand, it is no less perplexing than strange that the first critical peruser of the manuscript should have failed to see that the poem was peculiarly qualified to seize the world's attention and cause what is termed now-a-days 'a sensation.' Dallas certainly was no prophet; but the novelist and poetaster (to whose hands Byron committed the MS. of the 'Hints from Horace' on 15th July, 1811, and the MS. of 'Childe Harold' on the following day, at Reddish's Hotel, St. James's Street) had enough literary feeling and discernment to see at once that 'Childe Harold,' the work of a writer in his twenty-third year, would prove one of the memorable poems of its period.

Talking about the poems with Dallas, discussing less agreeable matters (one of them being the prosecution of the editor of the 'Scourge' for two libels on himself and his mother) with Mr. Hanson, and receiving visits from callers especially uncongenial to the man who described himself as 'hating bustle as he hated a bishop,' Byron remained at Reddish's Hotel in St. James's Street, London, for a fortnight, when, just as he was on the point of leaving town with his solicitor (Mr. Hanson) for Lancashire, with the intention of calling at Newstead *en passant*, alarming intelligence came to him from the Abbey. His mother was seriously ill. The next day (August 1, 1811), before leaving town, he received the announcement of her death. On the morrow (August 2), on the road from town to Nottinghamshire, he wrote a brief letter from Newport Pagnell to his friend Pigot (now Dr. Pigot), giving the intelligence of his mother's death, and saying that the sad event would not affect the measures for punishing the libellous editor of the 'Scourge.' 'I am told,' said the writer, 'she was in little pain, and not aware of her situation. I now feel the truth of Mr. Gray's observation, "That we can only have one mother!" Peace be with her!'

The right feeling of these words is moderately expressed ;

but there was no moderation in the grief to which Byron gave way at Newstead for a brief hour, after hearing the particulars of his mother's death; which was the result of apoplexy, caused by a fit of violent rage at the magnitude of an upholsterer's bill. In the middle of night, hearing a noise in the chamber of death, Mrs. By, the waiting-woman of the deceased lady, entered the apartment, where she found Lord Byron sitting by the side of his lifeless mother. 'Oh, Mrs. By,' he exclaimed, bursting into tears, 'I had but one friend in the world, and she is gone.' To account for the vehemence of this grief for a mother, whom he had regarded with an aversion at the same time natural and most unnatural,—the mother of whose cruelty he had spoken with passionate repugnance to the Marquis of Sligo, as they were dressing after swimming in the Gulf of Lepanto,—readers must remember what was said in a former chapter of the way in which Byron's memory, sensibility and imagination acted upon one another. Coarse, harsh, violent creature though she was, the woman, who had nursed her little step-daughter Augusta with affectionate devotion in France, had not been wanting in the same womanliness to her own child in his times of infantile sickness. In a certain way, she had loved him; and now the recollection of long unremembered and remote exhibitions of maternal tenderness rose to his mind, and unmanned him.

Grief is no precise measurer of its own intensity :—a fact to be remembered in considering Byron's grief by those who would not do him the injustice of questioning the sincerity of its extravagant exhibitions. What he said truly of his early friendships, he could no less truly have said of all the movements of all his affections. They were passions. His loves, hatreds, friendships, griefs were so passionate, that as long as any one of them was in full force and activity, it possessed him completely, and caused him for the moment to imagine he had never loved or abhorred any one else. Touched by grief for the death of his Newfoundland dog, the young man, who could not go abroad for a couple of years without taking miniatures of his Harrow 'favourites' with him, wrote of the animal :—

'To mark a friend's remains these stones arise ;  
*I never knew but one, and here he lies.'*

Stirred by sudden tenderness for the mother, whom he had regarded with excusable dislike, he discovered in a moment, *not* that after all he had a lingering fondness for her, *but* that he never '*had but one friend in the world, and she was gone.*' For the moment, whilst thinking of him with tearful eyes, he took the same view of John Wingfield :—



'Oh, known the earliest, and esteem'd the most!  
Dear to a heart where nought was left so dear!'

The ink with which these lines were written was not dry,—in truth, they had not been penned (the sentiment of the written words being only recollected emotion),—when the poet's grief for Wingfield's death becomes trivial in comparison with his grief for some one far dearer. 'In Matthews,' he writes to Dallas on September 7, 1811, 'I have lost my "guide, philosopher, and friend;" in Wingfield a friend only, but one whom I could have wished to have preceded in his long journey.' It is notable also how in the extravagance of passionate sorrow for the loss of a friend, Byron used to tell his surviving friends that their regard for him was something far inferior to real friendship. 'I believe,' he wrote to his true, loving, and grateful friend Hodgson,—thinking probably of Eddleston, when he penned the words, 'the only human being that ever loved me in truth and entirely was of, or belonging to, Cambridge, and, in that, no change can now take place.'

The violence of his grief for his mother was naturally of no great duration. Instead of following her coffin to the grave, he watched the hearse and train of mourners from the Abbey door, and, as soon as they were out of sight, ordered his servant (young Rushton) to fetch 'the gloves.' While the service was being read over Catherine Gordon Byron, her son was sparring with the servant,—throwing, as the boy noticed, unusual force into his blows. Doubtless in the exercise he sought escape from mental distress, due in some degree to filial affection and also in some degree to uneasiness at feeling so little regret for his mother's departure. In a few minutes, as though the exercise failed in its object, he suddenly threw down the gloves, and went from the servant's sight.

Byron had scarcely received the news of his mother's death, when Charles Skinner Matthews was drowned whilst bathing in the Cam on August 2, 1811, close upon the very time at which the poet was writing from Newport Pagnell to Dr. Pigot. A man of brilliant academic distinctions, Matthews was intending to offer himself at the next election as a candidate for the honour of representing his university in Parliament, when an attack of cramp ended his career in all the brightness of its promise. The second of Byron's Cambridge friends to die of drowning, Charles Skinner Matthews had on the day before his death written the poet a letter, that forwarded from London reached Newstead on the 5th, whither it was speedily followed, if indeed it was not preceded, by the intelligence that its writer was no longer with the living. 'Some curse,' Byron wrote from



Newstead to Scrope Davies on August 7, 1811, 'hangs over me and mine. My mother lies a corpse in this house; one of my best friends is drowned in a ditch.' Exactly a fortnight later he wrote to Dallas, 'You did not know Matthews: he was a man of the most astonishing powers, as he sufficiently proved at Cambridge, by carrying off more prizes and fellowships, against the ablest candidates, than any other graduate on record; but a most decided atheist, indeed noxiously so, for he proclaimed his principles in all societies.'

To realise fully the quickness with which these successive blows by Death's cold hand fell on Byron, the reader should know that the poet received the confirmation of the intelligence of Wingfield's death in Coimbra, only a few hours before he left town. 'You may,' he wrote to Hodgson on August 22, 1811, 'have heard of the sudden death of my mother, and poor Matthews, which, with that of Wingfield (of which I was not fully aware till just before I left town, and indeed hardly believed it), has made a sad chasm in my connexions.' The news of his mother's illness came to him on July 31st; the confirmation of the report of Wingfield's death and the intelligence of his mother's death reached him almost at the same hour on the night of August 1st, or early in the following morning; on the 7th of August, probably sooner, he knew that Skinner was dead. He was already mourning for his *protégé*, Eddleston; and it has been told how, in October 1811, he wrote to a friend that between the beginning of May and the end of August of that year, he had lost by death six of his nearest associates.

It can cause no astonishment that after so remarkable a series of bereavements, which would have shaken the fortitude and stirred the feelings of the hardest and coldest nature to transient sadness, Byron was for several months the prey of sorrow that alternated between the agitations of hysterical vehemence and the gloom of profound melancholy. The man of feminine softness and emotionality was not the man to walk with firm step and stoical composure through the terrors and darkness of the Valley of the Shadow of Death. He was still in an early stage of this appalling journey when, in the week immediately following his mother's interment, he gave instructions for the will,—with its legacy of 7000*l.* to the Greek boy (Nicolo Giraud), and its provision for his own interment, by the side of his dog, Boatswain, 'in the vault of the garden of Newstead, without any ceremony or burial-service whatever;' and with its codicil enjoining that his body should on no account be removed from the vault, and providing that 'in case any of his successors

within the entail (from bigotry or otherwise) should think proper to remove his carcass, such proceeding should be attended by forfeiture of the estate, which in such case should go to the testator's sister, the Honourable Augusta Leigh, and her heirs on similar conditions.’ The day on which he gave the first instructions for this will was the day on which he wrote to Dallas, ‘It is strange that I look on the skulls which stand beside me (I have always had *four* in my study) without emotion, but I cannot strip the features of those I have known of their fleshy covering, even in idea, without a hideous sensation; but the worms are less ceremonious.’ Two months later, he is dating the first of the poems to ‘Thyrza’ (October 11th, 1811); and *the* doleful letter to Dallas (October 11th, 1811); and the Epistle to a Friend (beginning ‘Oh, banish care’—October 11th, 1811) with the frantic threats and hysterical foolishness of its concluding verses; and the six concluding stanzas of the second canto of the ‘Pilgrimage,’ the last of them being also dated October 11th, 1811, whilst the third and fourth of the same stanzas (Stanzas xcv. and xcvi. of Canto II.) are part of the outpouring of song to Thyrza,—

‘Thou too art gone, thou loved and lovely one !  
Whom youth and youth's affections bound to me ;  
Who did for me what none beside have done,  
Nor shrank from one albeit unworthy thee.  
What is my being ? thou hast ceased to be !  
Nor staid to welcome here thy wanderer home,  
Who mourns o'er hours which we no more shall see—  
Would they had never been, or were to come !  
Would he had ne'er returned to find fresh cause to roam !  
‘Oh ! ever loving, lovely, and beloved !  
How selfish Sorrow ponders on the past,  
And clings to thoughts now better far removed !  
But Time shall tear thy shadow from me last.  
All thou couldst have of mine, stern Death ! thou hast ;  
The parent, friend, and now the more than friend ;  
Ne'er yet for one thine arrows flew so fast,  
And grief with grief continuing still to blend,  
Hath snatch'd the little joy that life had yet to lend.”

Why Byron selected the 11th of October in preference to any other day for the date to be assigned to the letter and several pieces of song, the writer of this page can offer no suggestion—unless it may be assumed that the 11th of October was chosen because it was the last day of his literary labours at Newstead—the day of drawing together the threads of sorrowful thought and solitary effort—before he went to Cambridge and London. It is not to be supposed that so much work of brain and heart and pen was accomplished on one day. It is, however, only reasonable to suspect that

literary mystification—a game in which Byron delighted—was one, if not the only, object of the fictitious dating.

After spending something more than ten weeks at Newstead in sad seclusion, Byron went to Cambridge, where (on the 29th of October) he wrote Tom Moore a letter on the subject of the Irish poet's reasonable demand for some kind of satisfaction for the ridicule put upon him in the 'English Bards and Scotch Reviewers.' From Cambridge he went to St. James's Street, London, and stayed there till he returned to Newstead for the Christmas holidays, when he entertained Hodgson and Harness in the rooms, whose crimson hangings and cheerful fires caused Harness soon to lose 'the melancholy feeling of being domiciled in the wing of an extensive ruin.' Of the weeks spent in London (where Byron used his club 'The Alfred,' to which he had been elected during his absence in Greece) the most memorable incident was the dinner (a *partie carrée*) at Sam Rogers's table, where the author of 'Childe Harold' met his host, Moore and Thomas Campbell for the first time;—the dinner at which Byron, to the surprise of his three companions who had heard nothing of his eccentric diet, declined the banker's fish and meat and wine, and, in default of biscuits and soda-water, stayed his hunger with potatoes and vinegar. At Newstead the poet and his two guests, Hodgson and Harness, spent the hours of their intercourse chiefly indoors, in literary work and literary chat, the weather of the singularly dark and dreary season affording them no inducement to leave rooms ample enough for the mild exercise of carpet-walking. Rising late the trio went to bed late; and after a lapse of more than half a century, Harness remembered how on several occasions their more serious conversation, turning on questions of religion, gave him opportunities for observing how strongly and lamentably the extreme Calvinism of the poet's early religious training in Scotland had affected his regard for the principles of Christianity;—the chief result of the discipline being 'a most miserable prejudice, which appeared to be the only obstacle to his hearty acceptance of the Gospel.' There was of course nothing in the poet's way of entertaining the young Cantab, who was reading hard for his degree and holy orders, to afford a colour of probability to the strange tales told in later time of Byron's wild and voluptuous life in the halls of his ancestors,—tales for which the merry doings in the May 1809 were less accountable than the fictions of 'Childe Harold.' It must, however, be conceded that, if Harness could have looked beneath the decorous surface of life at the



Abbey, he would have seen one or two things to disapprove in his old schoolmate's domestic arrangements. To justify its title this book must glance for a moment at unedifying circumstances, that will jar rudely against the feelings of readers who would prefer to think of the poet, during his grief for the vanished Thyrsa, or at least so soon after its subsidence, as indifferent to the charms of ordinary womankind. Paphian girls with natty caps and bright ribbons on their servile heads still sung and smiled in the galleries of the Abbey mansion, one of whom (to use Moore's words) 'had been supposed to stand rather too high in the favour of her master;' and the Christmas holidays were scarcely over when this young serving-woman and one of her companions were sent off to their relations in consequence of acts of levity and disloyalty duly proved against them. To Moore, holding the views of his generation on domestic morals, which fortunately are not the views of decent people of the present age, this affair was remarkable only for the degree to which 'the young peer allowed the discovery of the culprit's misbehaviour to affect his mind.' After speaking of his weakness in respect to these faithless young women as 'a two months' weakness,' Byron adds vehemently in a letter to Hodgson, 'I have one request to make, which is, never mention a woman again in any letter to me, or even allude to the existence of the sex;'—the fervour and extravagance of the entreaty showing that even in so discreditable a business Byron was more influenced by sentiment than most young men would have been.

On the 27th of February, 1812, just eleven days after the date of the last-mentioned letter to Hodgson, the young peer delivered his maiden speech in the House of Lords in the debate on the Nottingham Frame-breaking Bill;—a speech that made a favourable impression on the crowded assembly, that had been brought together not more by the importance of the subject under discussion than by desire to see the poet, whose verse and travels had already made him an interesting personage. Having prepared himself for the essay, by writing his oration with care, as he had been wont in his boyhood to prepare for the Harrow 'declamations,' he entered the House with sentiments worthy of consideration, and on rising to his feet he soon made it obvious he would fail neither from want of elocutionary address nor from want of presence of mind. There was a generous disposition in the auditors to give him an encouraging reception and a full meed of applause; and he at least proved himself not undeserving of their indulgence. If not a success, the speech was so nearly successful, that the orator left the house with the

elation of triumph. Lord Eldon and Lord Harrowby had paid him the compliment of answering his arguments; Lord Holland and Lord Grenville had praised him in their speeches,—and commended him still more cordially in private chat. Whilst Lord Holland said, ‘You’ll beat them all if you persevere;’ Lord Grenville’s complaisance went to the length of saying, that in their construction some of the maiden orator’s periods resembled Burke’s. Sir Francis Burdett declared it ‘the best speech by a *Lord* since the “Lord knows when;”’—a compliment that delighted the Lord of Newstead, though it came from a politician of whom he had often spoken with sincere contempt. Meeting Dallas in the passage to the Great Chamber with an umbrella in his right hand, Byron exclaimed joyfully, ‘What! give your friend your left hand upon such an occasion?’ To Hodgson he wrote, ‘I have had many marvellous eulogies repeated to me since, in person and by proxy, from divers persons *ministerial*—yea, *ministerial*.’ No wonder that he was delighted with the stir and approving hum of the House, which he had entered three years before without an introducer. No longer faltering in the choice of his party, he threw himself into the arms of the Opposition, and was welcomed to Holland House, Melbourne House, and all ‘the best Whig houses.’

Having made his *début* in ‘the Lords’ to his own contentment, though scarcely to the satisfaction of his most sanguine admirers, Byron made a second essay to achieve parliamentary distinction on April 21, 1812, in the debate on the Earl of Donoughmore’s motion for a Committee on the Roman Catholic Claims, but without placing himself higher in the opinion of the peers, or in the regard of politicians outside the hereditary chamber. It was felt that his manner was too theatrical and ‘stagey,’ and that the effect of his fine voice was diminished by ‘the chanting tone’ in which he delivered his periods; the same tone that had so disagreeable an effect in his recitations of poetry. Poets are seldom good reciters of poetry, from their disposition to ‘sing’ what they ought only to ‘say’; and in this respect Byron was a flagrant offender against elocutionary art. Later in the session, the poet was at the meeting of the Opposition peers, sitting next the Duke of Grafton who, in reply to his question ‘What is to be done next?’ begged him to ‘wake the Duke of Norfolk,’—snoring away in his seat.

Two days after the poet’s maiden speech in ‘the Lords’ appeared ‘Childe Harold.’ For a month early sheets of the poem had been in the hands of a few favoured persons,—poets of the first rank and people of the highest fashion. A few copies had also been distributed in confidence to critics, who

could be greatly powerful in giving the work immediate popularity. Rogers had received his early copy in January, and pleased with the compliment of the gift he had for weeks been telling the drawing-rooms of 'the great' what a treat was in store for them. 'It was,' says Moore, 'in the hands of Mr. Rogers I first saw the sheets of the poem, and glanced hastily over a few of the stanzas which he pointed out to me as beautiful.' Lady Caroline Lamb, then in the zenith of her fashionable celebrity, thus got a view of the poem,—*not* in manuscript (as countless writers have asserted on the authority of the lady herself, who after Byron's death wrote to Lady Morgan that Rogers 'offered her the MS. of "Childe Harold" to read'), *but* in the 'early printed copy,' lent her by Rogers, under strict seal of secrecy. Lady Caroline was delighted, and went about her bright quarter of the town, telling every one she had seen the forthcoming poem and was 'in the secret,' though she was bound in honour to tell no one where or how she had seen the book. The novel or poem of which Lady Caroline spoke so highly could not fail to make a stir and run through editions in a single season. 'I must see him,—I am dying to see him!' she exclaimed to Rogers, in her impatience to behold the new poet and hasten to her doleful fate. 'He has a club-foot, and bites his nails,' said Rogers. 'If he is as ugly as *Æsop*, I must know him,' returned the impulsive lady of irresistible beauty, high birth, highest fashion.

No wonder that the poem, thus introduced to 'the world,'—the poem that coming into the world from the shop of the meanest bookseller and under the most inauspicious circumstances would have made its mark in two days,—was no sooner published (on February 29, 1812) by Mr. Murray, the rapidly rising publisher of 'society,' than it was seen everywhere, read by everybody. No wonder that the author 'awoke one morning and found himself famous,' that statesmen and philosophers wrote him grave utterances of their homage, that the Queens of Society rained *billets-doux* upon him, that St. James's Street was blocked with carriages pressing to his door, that talk of 'Byr'n, Byr'n,' was audible over the babble of every dinner-table and *salon* of Mayfair. Marvellous stories were told in the literary cliques of the price paid for the poem by its publisher; some of the gossips, who of course had their 'information on the very best authority,' asserting that Murray had paid at the rate of a guinea a line for the poem. The price really paid by the publisher was 600*l.* (more than six shillings a line); and the poet, who of course could not descend so far from his nobility as to take a bookseller's money for his own use, gave the 600*l.* to



his poor relation and literary 'devil,' Dallas, who had negotiated the terms with Mr. Murray and seen the verses through the press with exemplary care and assiduity. At the present time one may well smile at the sensitiveness which made Byron, burdened with debts and clogged with mortgages, decline to spend on himself the earnings of his pen. A few years later he stood out stoutly for the extra shillings of the guineas from his publisher, counted them carefully, and pocketed them with complacency. But in 1812 the world still held to antiquated notions touching the pecuniary obligations of 'noblesse.' A nobleman in those days would have flushed scarlet at a proposal that he should become a sleeping partner in a wine business or a Manchester warehouse, and would have put a bullet through his head rather than see his name figuring on the prospectus of a joint-stock company. It was a question whether a peer could take interest for money lying at his banker's 'on deposit,' without sullyng his nobility with a taint of trade. Whilst peers felt in this way, the populace had a strong opinion that it was unutterably 'mean' for a lord to earn money in any way but fighting, gaming, political jobbery, the very highest official employment, and (through the medium of well-salaried agents) the clever management of land. Far from being peculiar on the point of dignity, Byron was not more certain than the ignoble journalists of his acquaintance that, as a peer, he could not honourably take to his own use the pecuniary fruits of his literary toil. No sooner had the tide turned against him, and the fashion of decrying him replaced the fashion of extolling him, than one of his fiercest assailants in the press charged him with making large sums of money by his pen, and spending the money so earned on his own pleasures. And this monstrous accusation seemed so sure to lower the poet in the esteem of all right-minded people that, whilst Dallas wrote a public denial and disproof of the calumny, Byron's friends went about the clubs and drawing-rooms, assuring 'the town' that he was quite incapable of such baseness of spirit and manners.

'Childe Harold,' the poem which people of fashion praised madly, was published on the same day as Lord G. Grenville's poem which every one abused badly. On June 7, 1812, Lady Morgan, already 'in the swim' of success and the brightness of butterfly celebrity, wrote to Mrs. Lefanu, 'When I was in London, Lord G. Grenville read me a poem of his own on the same subject as "Childe Harold." The rival lords published their poems the same day; the one is cried up to the skies, the other, alas, is cried down to ——!' Lord G. Grenville was the poet 'to bite his nails'; Byron had every

reason to be proud and careful of the tips of his shapely fingers.

On entering the great world with the glory of ‘Childe Harold’ on his brow, the earnestness of it in his eyes, the melody of it flowing from his lips, Byron was in the perfection of his personal attractiveness. He was not a handsome man,—he was beautiful. The glowing fire overpowered the brownness of his auburn hair, that gradually deepened almost to the deepest and richest brown of auburn, before it turned grey. The blue-grey eyes were eloquent of emotion through their long, fine, almost black lashes. The brow, over and about which the feathery auburn curls played in tiny wavelets, was white as marble; his usually pale complexion was delicate even to transparency, and at moments of joyous excitement was touched with the faintest sanguine glow. His mouth, with its white and dainty teeth, with its lips of feminine sweetness and something of feminine voluptuousness, and his delicately modelled chin, strong enough for fascination—far, far too weak for moral robustness—were the lips and chin of a lovely, sensitive, capricious, charming woman, rather than the lips and chin of a man. It has been already remarked that his countenance, especially in the mouth and eyes, was remarkable for mobility and expressiveness,—curiously in harmony with the quickness and vehemence of his emotional temperament. His long broad throat, broad chest, and square-set shoulders were, however, abundantly expressive of masculine strength. The shapeliness of his small, white hands did not escape observation at a time when it was the fashion for modish people to have models of their hands in marble on their drawing-room tables. In their smallness these delicate hands accorded with the poet’s feet, that were not wanting in apparent shapeliness, though they suffered from the lameness which no one could exactly describe or satisfactorily account for. Sweeter, and richer and more tender even than his verse, Byron’s voice was in his ordinary conversation, perhaps, more musical than the voice of any other man or woman of his period. To the children of the houses, where he was a most frequent and familiar guest, he was the ‘gentleman who speaks like music.’

Enough of his looks, for the present. Let something be said of the manner of this young nobleman who had been trained in the parlours of a little country town for conquest in London drawing-rooms. Fortunately he has left us his own account of his bearing and demeanour towards men and women, at this point of his career, in the following stanzas of ‘Don Juan’ :—

- ‘His manner was perhaps the more seductive,  
 Because he ne’er seem’d anxious to seduce ;  
 Nothing affected, studied, or constructive  
 Of coxcombry or conquest : no abuse  
 Of his attractions marr’d the fair perspective,  
 To indicate a Cupidon broke loose,  
 And seem to say, ‘Resist us if you can’—  
 Which makes a dandy while it spoils a man.
- ‘They are wrong—that’s not the way to set about it ;  
 As, if they told the truth, could well be shown.  
 But, right or wrong, Don Juan was without it ;  
 In fact, his manner was his own alone :  
 Sincere he was—at least you could not doubt it,  
 In listening merely to his voice’s tone.  
 The devil hath not in all his quiver’s choice  
 An arrow for the heart like a sweet voice.
- ‘By nature soft, his whole address held off  
 Suspicion ; though not timid, his regard  
 Was such as rather seemed to keep aloof,  
 To shield himself than put you on your guard :  
 Perhaps ’twas hardly quite assured enough,  
 But modesty’s at times its own reward,  
 Like virtue ; and the absence of pretension  
 Will go much farther than there’s need to mention.
- ‘Serene, accomplish’d, cheerful but not loud ;  
 Insinuating without insinuation ;  
 Observant of the foibles of the crowd,  
 Yet ne’er betraying this in conversation ;  
 Proud with the proud, yet courteously proud,  
 So as to make them feel he knew his station  
 And theirs :—without a struggle for priority,  
 He neither brooked nor claimed superiority.
- ‘That is, with men : with women he was what  
 They pleased to make or take him for ; and their  
 Imagination’s quite enough for that :  
 So that the outline’s tolerably fair,  
 They fill the canvas up—and ‘verbum sat.’  
 If once their phantasies be brought to bear  
 Upon an object, whether sad or playful,  
 They can transfigure brighter than a Raphael.’

A clever man’s manner is always so nearly what he wishes it to be, that one could rely on the general fidelity of this portraiture, even if its testimony were unsupported by other evidence. Fortunately, however, the poet’s account of his own demeanour during his brief hour of social triumph is sustained by those of his biographers who knew him in this period, and half-a-hundred other persons of his acquaintance to whom we are indebted for gossip about him,—by Moore, Dallas, Hunt, Hobhouse, Harness, Lady Morgan, Lady Caroline Lamb, and a throng of other sure witnesses. By the men and women, who regarded him from a distance or knew him only slightly, he was



thought undemonstrative and taciturn, at times even frigid. That even Lady Caroline was not insensible to the coldness and reserve of his demeanour at their first meeting, appears from the passage of ‘Glenarvon’ which says,—‘A studied courtesy in his manner, a proud humility, mingled with a certain cold reserve, amazed and repressed the enthusiasm his youth and misfortunes excited.’ ‘Lord Byron,’ Lady Morgan wrote in June 1812, ‘the author of delightful “Childe Harold” (which has more *force, fire and thought* than anything I have read for an age), is cold, silent and reserved in his manners.’ But Lady Morgan had only met the poet in crowded rooms, and probably had never even exchanged the courtesies of introduction with him. At most she was one of the multitudes of worshipful womankind, who regarded the new poet with reverential curiosity wherever he went. The remains of the poet’s constitutional shyness were observable in his coldness and severe formality to strangers. These characteristics of his ordinary bearing in throngs were sometimes—perhaps too often for his advantage—mistaken for indications of pride, never for signs of insolence. In truth, though he was accused of superciliousness after he had begun to fall in social favour, and though he sometimes provoked the accusation by his bearing *to men* whom he held in disesteem or aversion, nothing was more foreign than insolence to his demeanour or temper in the brief summer of his triumph in his native land. Appealing to Time the Avenger, after his banishment, he could exclaim with an unreprieving conscience,—

‘If thou hast ever seen me too elate,  
Hear me not : but if calmly I have borne  
Good, and reserved my pride against the hate  
Which shall not whelm me, let me not have worn  
This iron in my soul in vain—shall *they* not mourn?’

And whilst bearing himself courteously and modestly, though with guarded speech and a show of coldness to the many of whom he knew little or nothing at all, to the men, with whom he was intimate, Byron was a very fountain of joyousness and genial humour,—brimming with quaint anecdote, bubbling over with frolic and merriment, and not seldom running out into the practical jokes of a jolly schoolboy. ‘Nothing, indeed,’ says Moore, ‘could be more amusing and delightful than the contrast which his manners afterwards, when we were alone, presented to his proud reserve in the brilliant circle we had just left. It was like the bursting gaiety of a boy let loose from school, and seemed as if there was no extent of fun or tricks of which he was not capable.’

With women he was what they pleased to make or take him for. But he was most pleased with them, when they treated him as nearly as possible like 'a favourite and sometimes froward sister.' The reader may smile but must not laugh:—it was as 'a favourite and sometimes froward sister' that he was thought of and treated by Hobhouse and other men. What then more natural for him to like to be thought of and treated by women in the same way? To be received by them on this footing, he would leave his bed early (say at 11 A.M.) so that he might breakfast with them, open their letters for them, chat with them, fondle their children in their boudoirs, for an hour or two at a time, before less privileged visitors dropt in for luncheon. It was in the character of candidate for the place of a sister in her affections that he sate for an entire hour with Lady Caroline Lamb, nursing her ladyship's babe all the time, without speaking a word above a whisper lest the sleeping infant should be roused to consciousness. As 'a favourite and sometimes froward sister' he hung about the Countess of Oxford's skirts, playing at odd minutes with her beautiful little girl, Charlotte,—precisely of the same age as Margaret Parker, when as a schoolboy he loved his pretty cousin passionately. As the Countess's sister and the little Lady Charlotte's aunt, he wrote the verses to Ianthe, with

'that eye, which wild as the gazelle's,  
Now brightly bold or beautifully shy,  
Wins as it wanders, dazzles where it dwells.'

If Ianthe in her innocence had put the forbidden question to her mother's sister, and asked, 'Why to one so young his strain he would commend?' the unspoken answer would have been, 'Because you remind me of my boyish passion for my cousin Margaret, of whom I thought tearfully, and wretchedly, and yet not altogether unhappily, when I wrote my beautiful poetry to Thyrsa.' When a young man is allowed to play the part of a sister to a beautiful woman, the position is dangerous both to the one and the other. For the man, who is sympathized with and treated like a sister, whilst feeling and acting like one, may in a moment be stirred by masculine impulses to feel and act like a man;—in which case, he feels and acts like a man without self-control, and the woman remains what she has been all along—an excited and weak woman.

One of the incidents of this London season (1812) was the poet's introduction to the greatest personage of the realm *vice* a person with a more august title, but now in retirement from illness. At a ball given at a great house in July, where the

poet was present, the Prince Regent declared the delight it would give him to number the author of 'Childe Harold' amongst his personal acquaintance. Of course Byron was introduced to the Prince, who was still smarting under the 'Lines to a Weeping Lady,' which the poet had thrown off in the previous March. Had he not attributed the anonymous lines to Tom Moore, His Royal Highness would have been less favourably disposed to their author, with whom he now held a long and animated conversation, on poets and poetry, and more particularly Walter Scott's poetry,—a conversation that closed with the Regent's flattering expression of his desire to see his lampooner at Carlton House. It shows how manageable a creature Byron was that, in his delight at the Prince's blandishments, he put his auburn curls into powder and his person into a court-suit, for the purpose of attending a levee, which was postponed at the last moment. If the powder had not been decidedly unbecoming to his style of beauty, the poet would perhaps have grown grey again in homage to the guilty father of 'the weeping lady.' As it was, the accidental postponement of the ceremony, personal vanity and self-respect saved Byron from the mistake of going whither he should not have thought of going so soon after the first publication of the notorious verses.

Another incident of the season was the poet's attendance in May 1812, at the execution of Bellingham in front of Newgate. Coming to the Old Bailey about 3 A.M., with his old school-fellows, Bailey and John Madocks, he found the house, from which they were to witness the ghastly spectacle, not yet open. Whilst Mr. Madocks was rousing the inmates of the house, Byron sauntered up the street with Mr. Bailey, when his compassion was stirred by the sight of a wretched woman lying on some doorsteps. The act of charity to which pity moved him had a startling and painful result; for, instead of taking the shillings he offered her, the miserable creature sprung to her feet, and uttering a yell of drunkard's derision began to imitate his lame gait. Byron said nothing either to the woman or the friend on whose arm he was leaning, but Bailey felt the violent trembling of his companion's arm, as they walked back to the house. Another story is told by Moore in illustration of the degree to which the poet's lameness was noticeable to casual passers, and his annoyance at the attention they paid to his infirmity.

'This way, my Lord,' cried a link-boy, as Byron was stepping, with Rogers, to his carriage, from the doorway of the house where they had shown themselves at a ball.

'He seems to know you,' said Rogers.



‘Know me!’ was the bitter reply; ‘every one knows me,—I am deformed!’

Apart from such annoyances, from which there was no escape, and the annoyance that came to him from the comparative failure of his second essay in parliamentary debate, Byron could, however, at the close of the London season, review the previous five months with unqualified complacency. To be really worth having, success should come early, before time and trouble have embittered the feelings and blunted the appetite for praise. The author (whether he be peer or commoner) who becomes the idol of society in his twenty-fifth year, and ‘going everywhere’ never joins a brilliant throng without knowing that every individual of it has read his book with enthusiastic admiration, is an enviable mortal, though he dare not satisfy the cravings of his hunger for food, and whilst overflowing with merriment and frolic is persuaded that he is ‘one of the most melancholy wretches in existence.’

Having spent the London season of 1812 in the brightest circles of fashion and dignity, Byron spent the closing weeks of summer and the autumnal months at Cheltenham (never in higher fashion), and in visits to some of the best houses of the country,—the rural homes of the Earl of Jersey, the Marquis of Lansdowne, and other personages of light and leading. Making his head-quarters at Cheltenham, where for several weeks he had a pleasant loitering time with the Jerseys, Melbournes, Cowpers, Hollands, Rawdons, and Oxfords; and returning once and again from the country-houses to his lodgings at the Gloucestershire spa, he passed the greater part of his time there till the end of November,—reading, scribbling letters, writing good poetry and bad poetry (the verse of the latter sort comprising the trumpery satire on ‘The Waltz,’ which he had no sooner published anonymously, than he disavowed it by means disagreeably near falsehood), and meditating on a disappointment that will be mentioned more particularly in the next chapter.

And how about the pecuniary affairs of the peer, who, living lavishly, had no sufficient revenue for the payment of the interest of his debts? Soon after his mother’s death he received from her trustee, Baron Clerk, the residue of the price paid for the Gight estate,—something under 4000*l.*; a sum that enabled the poet to pay a few of his most urgent creditors. Coming to him at a moment of divers difficulties, this modest inheritance was a great relief. But it did not lessen the necessity for measures that would give him an adequate and sure income, after releasing him from money-lenders and clamorous tradesmen. And now that his literary triumph and social success had afforded him

superior titles to respect, he could with calmness and discretion think of selling the picturesque estate, to which he had clung for honour's sake, so long as he had no higher position than that of the chief of an impoverished territorial family. The man who had become famous no longer needed some old ruins and a few farms in Nottinghamshire as evidences of his respectability within the lines of his order. If the Newstead estate could be sold for 100,000*l.*, and so many thousands more as would wipe out his debts, he would stand more creditably in the eyes of the world, than he now stood as the owner of a noble park and ruinous mansion, without the means to live in them. With the interest of money at five per cent., he would have 5000*l.* of sure yearly revenue, and retain the still unproductive Rochdale property, to save him from the discredit of being a landless lord. Mr. Hanson had for years been imploring the young lord to take this view of his position; but the lawyer begged and preached in vain, till his client could with reason value himself on his achievements rather than on being the Lord of Newstead Abbey. Early in the autumn of 1812 Newstead was offered for sale at Garraway's, when it was 'bought in,' 90,000*l.* being the highest offer made in the auction-room for the property. Soon, however, Mr. Claughton came forward with an offer that even exceeded the vendor's hopes. 'You heard,' Byron wrote from Cheltenham to his friend, William Bankes, 'that Newstead is sold—the sum 140,000*l.*; 60,000*l.* to remain in mortgage on the estate for three years, paying interest, of course. Rochdale is also likely to do well—so my worldly matters are mending.' By this contract it was stipulated that the estate should remain in the vendor's hands till the purchaser should fulfil his part of the agreement, and that in case of the buyer failing in that respect within a given time he should forfeit 25,000*l.*, and the bargain become void. Two years later the forfeiture was paid by Mr. Claughton in consequence of his inability to complete the purchase; and the estate continued with Byron. Enabling him to pay some of his most pressing debts, the 25,000*l.* also enabled him to live in comparative freedom from pecuniary anxieties till his marriage with a lady, whose fortune, which had been egregiously magnified by rumour, brought his creditors down upon him at a moment when the concessions of his marriage-settlement had seriously lessened his ability to satisfy their desire for immediate payment.

Whilst the fashionable drawing-rooms were applauding the force, fire, and melody of 'Childe Harold,' the far larger multitudes of thoughtful and devout people living in comparative humility outside the uttermost breastworks of 'society' were

considering the religious sentiments of the poem with alarm and abhorrence, and coming to the conclusion that the author was destined to perdition, and that, if his pernicious influence were not counteracted by bold and timely denunciations of his impiety, he would lead countless thousands of light-headed people to the doom of eternal punishment. It is significant of the manners of the period that, whilst these earnest people were quick to detect the poet's infidelity and exclaim against it, they do not appear to have been greatly shocked by his account of his naughty life at Newstead before he started on his travels. The account was in truth too accordant with their conceptions of lordly living, and also with their experience of the less exalted ways of human life, for it to occasion them either astonishment or anxiety. But it was a new and terrifying thing for a poet to write of matters pertaining to religion in the style of the third and fourth stanzas of the second Canto:—

‘Son of the Morning, rise! approach you here!  
Come—but molest not yon defenceless urn:  
Look on this spot—a nation’s sepulchre!  
Abode of gods, whose shrines no longer burn.  
Even gods must yield—religions take their turn:  
’Twas Jove’s—’tis Mahomet’s—and other creeds  
Will rise with other years, till man shall learn  
Vainly his incense soars, his victim bleeds;  
Poor child of Doubt and Death, whose hope is built on reeds.  
‘Bound to the earth, he lifts his eye to heaven—  
Is’t not enough, unhappy thing! to know  
Thou art? Is this a boon so kindly given,  
That being, thou would’st be again, and go,  
Thou know’st not, reck’st not to what region, so  
On earth no more, but mingled with the skies?  
Still wilt thou dream on future joy and woe?  
Regard and weigh yon dust before it flies:  
That little urn saith more than thousand homilies.’

Though he was far from imagining what a storm of reprobation these words would bring upon him in the course of a few months, and still farther from conceiving that the outcry against them would grow louder and fiercer throughout successive years, Byron had not been many days at Cheltenham before he heard the first sounds of the rising tempest. For the moment he could smile at the letters and verses that came to him through Mr. Murray’s office from good-natured correspondents ‘anxious for his conversion from certain infidelities,’ and could write with more flippancy than good taste to his publisher on September 14, 1812, ‘The other letters are from ladies, who are welcome to convert me when they please; and if I can discover them, and they be young, as they say they are, I could convince them



of my devotion.' Nine months later, when the protest had been steadily growing more audible, and the importance of the protesting voices had become more apparent, he wrote in a sober vein to the editor of 'The Quarterly,' 'To your advice on religious topics, I shall equally attend. Perhaps the best way will be by avoiding them altogether. The already published objectionable passages have been much commented upon, but certainly they have been rather strongly interpreted. I am no bigot to infidelity, and did not expect that, because I doubted the immortality of man, I should be charged with denying the existence of a God. It was the comparative insignificance of ourselves and *our world*, when placed in comparison with the mighty whole, of which it is an atom, that first led me to imagine that our pretensions to eternity might be over-rated.' When Gifford, whom the young poet regarded with 'veneration,' and used to term his 'father' in literary matters, urged him to be cautious, and spoke of rocks and dangers ahead, Byron could not doubt that he was sailing in perilous waters. And as the months went by, he saw more and more clearly the wisdom of his 'father's' counsels.

Of all the many strange mistakes made by clever men about Byron's career none is stranger than the error of supposing that the storm, that drove him from his native land, was brewed in a single hour, and that it was altogether due to the caprice of fashion and society's fantastic readiness to visit the sins of many upon one, and drive that one forth into the desert as a scapegoat. The sentiment, before which the poet retired in early manhood, almost in his boyhood, into exile for his remaining days, was a sentiment of slow growth and divers causes. Not the least powerful of those causes was the general social resentment at his religious opinions, and this cause began to operate before the first edition of 'Childe Harold' was exhausted. No greatly celebrated man ever had a shorter term of unqualified and unbroken applause. The unanimity of praise was the affair of a single day and a single class. It can scarcely be said to have lasted even in that one class for twenty-four hours. The morning's fame, of which he used to speak, had lost something of its whiteness before the evening. Even from the outset of his career, praise and dispraise joined hands to make him in the same moment famous and infamous.

## CHAPTER XIII.

## THE RIVAL COUSINS-IN-LAW.

The World of Fashion—Lady Caroline Lamb—Her Looks and Nature—  
 ‘Mad, Bad, and Dangerous to Know’—Platonic Love—Miss Milbanke  
 —Her Fortune and Expectations—Her Influence over Byron—Lady  
 Caroline ‘Playing the Devil’—Love turned to Hate.

It was a mad world Byron entered at twenty-four years of age, with the honour of his poem fresh upon him;—a wild world strangely fascinating and perilous to the sensitive and excitable young man who, with his reputation for gallantry and genius, his travels in Greece and songs to Eastern beauties, knew no more of fashionable society and the ‘high life,’ than any son of an English parsonage who, during his education at school and college, has spent his holidays in the parlours of a small provincial town. In his later time he used in his bitterness to declare that in domestic morality Venice would endure comparison with London, and Italy with England; and if any reliance may be put on the chroniclers of English ‘society’ during the Regency, his words were only by a few degrees less truthful than severe.

It was a wild world, honouring women for their beauty provided it was mated with loose principle, and caring little for womanly virtue that was unattended with personal attractiveness. And of all its wild people none was wilder or more capricious, lighter or more wilful than Lady Caroline Lamb—the Mrs. Felix Lorraine of ‘Vivian Grey,’ the Lady Monteagle of ‘Venetia.’ Vivian thought Mrs. Felix Lorraine ‘a *dark* riddle.’ In respect to her person and character, the lady was, however, a light riddle. Her eyes, indeed, were dark and her countenance (in repose) was grave; but her complexion was fair, her figure slight, her hair fawn-flaxen shot with gold. Writers by the score have called her tresses golden,—but they were golden with a difference. Byron rewarded her for writing a book to prove he was satanic, by telling Medwin, with a view to publication, that she had scarcely ‘any personal attractions,’ and that ‘her figure, though genteel, was too thin to be good, and wanted that roundness which elegance and grace would vainly supply.’ Byron, however, thought better of the figure in 1812, and he never denied its possessor the merits of ‘an infinite vivacity and an imagination heated by novel-reading.’ Pressed upon

the point, he would have admitted, with her most intimate friend of the literary cliques, Lady Morgan, that she had 'a voice soft, low, caressing, that was at once a beauty and a charm, and worked much of that fascination which was peculiarly hers.' Her voice and all her other charms were at their perfection when, in her twenty-seventh year, she employed them to enthrall Byron, only twenty-four years old.

Now that fifty and more years have passed over her grave, and all who cared for her have gone hence, it is time to speak the truth—gently but fearlessly—of this poor Queen of Society. So much has been said insincerely of the harm Byron did her, it is well at length to hint that there is another side to the account,—the harm she did him. 'In spite of all the absurdity' of her behaviour to Byron, Rogers believed her *innocent*. Of what? Surely not innocent of acting in a way to justify ordinary observers of her conduct in thinking her guilty of everything of which she was suspected. And in regard to such a question, it should be remembered that the greater part of the social injury comes from appearances. Apart from the few persons to whom the reality would be especially injurious, the show of wickedness is every whit as hurtful as the reality. Moreover, what is to be said of the self-respect, the sense of dignity, the honour of a woman—descended from half-a-hundred noble houses, married to the finest-natured gentleman of her time, and having children to think for—who wantonly put herself in need of such a witness to character as Sam Rogers? More than enough having been said of her wit and genius, the time has come to speak—not harshly, but soberly and truthfully—of her arrant silliness. Though they contain a few redeeming passages, her three novels—'Glenarvon,' 'Graham Hamilton,' and 'Ada Reis,'—are the tales of an unusually foolish lady, notwithstanding the care expended by skilful 'hacks' in dressing them for the press. But writers being often better than their books, it is more generous to the lady to judge her by her letters. 'The only question,' she wrote, at a moment when social disgrace was upon her in a form that should have startled and scared the lightest woman out of habitual levity, 'I want you to solve is, shall I go abroad? shall I throw myself upon those who no longer want me, or shall I live a good sort of a half-kind of life in some cheap street a little way off, viz. the City Road, Shoreditch, Camberwell, or upon the top of a shop,—or shall I give lectures to little children, and keep a seminary, and thus earn my bread? . . . or shall I fret, fret, fret, and die; or shall I be dignified and fancy myself as Richard the Second did when he picked the nettle up—upon



a thorn?' This to Lady Morgan, when Medwin's book and its immediate consequences had compelled the writer's superb and royal-hearted husband, for his honour's sake, to put her from him in the gentlest and tenderest way! It is simply appalling to turn over Lady Caroline Lamb's letters, and remember that the giddy, light-hearted creature—devoid alike of mental force and moral fibre—was one of those personages whom Lord Beaconsfield used to style 'stateswomen,' and would have been a power in the government of the country, had she lived on good terms with her lord till he became premier!

The woman, so weak in everything but beauty, and temper, and vivacity, and drawing-room tact, could however be irresistibly charming. Her *rôle* in the wild world of which she was a queen was that of the saucy, freakish, impulsive, gushing creature, startling her friends at every turn by her eccentricities, and relieving the dulness of every assembly by doing or saying what no one else could do or say with an air of good breeding. Falling into a fit of fury about nothing at her wedding, she stormed at the officiating bishop, tore her dress to pieces, and was carried to her carriage nearly unconscious. The lisp of her tongue gave a piquancy to her startling words. 'Gueth how many pairth of thilk thtockingth I have on,' she said at a ball to Harness (a rather serious young Cantab reading for 'Orders'). Seeing by his blush that he could not answer the nice question, she answered it for him by saying 'Thieth,' as she raised her skirts above a pretty ankle, and pointed to a tiny foot. At Melbourne House this daughter of the third Earl of Bessborough used to amuse herself in the drawing-rooms playing ball with her pages. One of these boys having thrown a detonating squib into the fire, she punished him by hurling a ball at his head, so as to draw blood from his temple. 'Oh, my lady, you have killed me!' exclaimed the childish servitor; whereupon the lady rushed into the hall, screaming 'O God! I have murdered the page!' in so loud a voice, that the words were heard in the street and were fruitful of half-a-hundred wild rumours about the town of the horrible tragedy at Melbourne House. The temper and character of this strange woman's career were given by Byron in a single line of 'Don Juan.' She played the devil, and then wrote a novel. When Byron made her acquaintance she was in the earlier stage of her story. Just then, and till he had torn himself from her, it was enough for her to play the devil.

Madly vain, incessantly thinking of herself, and seizing every occasion to talk of herself, this absurd but delightful creature believed that no man could see her without admiring her, know

her without loving her. Taking seriously the compliments they paid her in common with hundreds of other women, she flattered herself that Rogers and Moore were her lovers,—the cynical bachelor-banker who loved no one; and the clever little Irishman who, ready at any moment to sing his sentimental ballads to any woman of fashion till his eyes brimmed with tears of emotion, loved no one but his Bessie. As soon as she had looked through the early copy of 'Childe Harold,' she made up her mind that Byron, even though he bit his nails and were as ugly as Æsop, should also love her. They first met at a ball, where she saw 'the women suffocating him' and 'throwing up their heads at him,'—a ball given by Lady Westmoreland, who (as Lady Caroline assured Lady Morgan) had known the poet in Italy,—a country, by the way, in which he had not then set foot. It indicates the kind of homage already rendered to Byron by the highest womankind of the land that, instead of bringing him up to be introduced to Lady Caroline, Lady Westmoreland led her up to be introduced to him. On coming within a few paces of the young man, Lady Caroline Lamb eyed him steadily, and without speaking a word or making movement of reverence or courtesy to him, turned away from him abruptly:—'I looked earnestly at him,' she told Lady Morgan, 'and turned on my heel.' A pretty scene,—and one that of course made a stir in the throng of suffocating worshippers. On reaching home she made this note of her opinion of the new poet and hero in these words, 'Mad—bad—and dangerous to know.' The words would have been better placed, had she written them against her own name. If it is bad for a woman to be the slave of caprice and a violent temper, and to be disloyal to a royal-natured husband, she was bad. To palliate her misconduct, her most strenuous and charitable apologists have insisted on her madness. As for the danger of knowing her:—it was an ill day for Byron (himself a weak and froward woman, in one half of his nature) when he yielded to the charms of the lady who was at best a sensitive and wayward woman.

Two or three days after this scene at Lady Westmoreland's ball in March 1812, Byron and Lady Caroline Lamb met at Holland House in the afternoon, when Lady Holland said, 'I must present Lord Byron to you.' 'That offer was made to you before; may I ask why you rejected it?' said Byron. If the lady had answered the question truly, she would have said, 'Because I thought it the best way of piquing you into loving me.' The next day, heated and muddy from a gallop in the park (she rode as boldly as she talked, and far better than she wrote), she was chatting with Rogers and Moore at Melbourne



House in her bespattered riding-habit, when on the announcement of Byron's arrival she 'flew out of the room' (as she told Lady Morgan) 'to wash herself.' On her return to the callers, Rogers said, 'Lord Byron, you are a happy man. Lady Caroline has been sitting here in all her dirt with us, but when you were announced, she flew to beautify herself.' To humour the poet, who delighted in children, and to pose herself in the most amiable manner before him, Lady Caroline sent for one of her children; and Byron did not leave till he had nursed the sleeping infant for more than an hour. Henceforth Lord Byron was for the next year or so an almost daily visitor (when in town) at Melbourne House, which was just then a place of daily meeting for the *beau monde*, for waltzes and quadrilles. Cherishing political ambition and seeing in a close alliance with the Lambs the shortest and surest path to political success, Byron became the tame cat—a *very* dangerous tame cat—of the great home of whiggism. To Lady Caroline he was soon as a sister,—no less so than to Lady Oxford a few months later. The mutual attachment of Lady Caroline and the young poet, who had learnt drawing-room manners at Southwell, was all that a Platonic love should be,—fervid enough for jealousy on either side; enthusiastic with a secret anticipation of the coming embarrassments by both parties; confidential in the highest degree with reserves on both sides; and so obviously innocent that people soon began to whisper that mischief would come of it. These remarks are of course equally applicable to the young man's platonic friendship with the Countess of Oxford. Every one was sure there was 'nothing wrong' in these friendships, but if people had been quite confident the friendships were 'altogether right,' so much would not have been said about them.

One of the first persons to feel that trouble might come of Lady Caroline's vehement liking for the young poet was her ladyship's mother-in-law, who spoke to Byron on the subject with the frankness she was entitled by her years and position to use to so youthful and inexperienced a person, of whose amiability and goodness of principle she had a high opinion;—for at the beginning of the present century, the fact of his having amused himself, as Byron was believed to have amused himself at Newstead, was not regarded as any serious evidence against his domestic morals, and absolutely no evidence whatever that he would play the libertine to women of his own social degree. 'You need not fear me,' Byron *is said* to have answered to the lady, whom he regarded with filial reverence, and even spoke of as his 'second mother' (no great compliment, by the way, to



Lady Melbourne); 'I do not pursue pleasure like other men; I labour under an incurable disease and a blighted heart. Believe me, she is safe with me!' Lady Melbourne's apprehensions were not however completely dissipated by her *protégé's* assurance, though she had implicit confidence in his kindness, rectitude, honour. Anyhow, she thought the future Lady Melbourne would be safer, if Byron were married, and married also within the lines of the Lamb family. With a clever, idolising wife to look after him, so gentle and affectionate a young man would be happier and less likely to deviate from his present virtuous course to the ways of Paphian girls. If he married the future Lord Melbourne's first cousin, his intimacy with the future Lady Melbourne would be so much a matter of course that no one would gossip about it maliciously. As a member of the Melbourne connexion, indeed of the Melbourne family, he would have a strong domestic interest in the social honour and credit of the Lambs. If the young lord, who wrote such charming poetry and had given promise of becoming an able debater, could only be led into loving and marrying her niece, he would have a wife with better opportunities for observing his friendship with Lady Caroline, and keeping it within proper limits, than any Lady Byron, taken outside the Lamb family. Lady Melbourne had reason for confidence that her niece—a young woman with a high reputation for dutifulness and other virtues—would act with her in keeping Lady Caroline in order, and be abundantly grateful to her for helping her to so good a match. What more natural project for the lady—a woman and therefore a match-maker, a mother and therefore anxious for her son's welfare, a 'stateswoman' and therefore with a taste for managing other people's affairs—to entertain for the good of her family?

And who was the niece?—Anne Isabella (familiarily styled Annabella) Milbanke, the only child of Lady Melbourne's brother, Sir Ralph Milbanke of Seaham co. Durham, and Halnaby co. York, who was just twenty years of age (three years and eight months Byron's junior), when her aunt first entertained this scheme for her matrimonial settlement. That the match would be a good one for Byron either in money or rank, Lady Melbourne neither imagined nor tried to persuade herself. She was looking out for her niece rather than for him, and for herself, her husband and her son more than for her niece.

One of the wildly wrong notions about Byron is that he married Miss Milbanke for her money, that he sought her out because she was an heiress. She was not an heiress at the time

he proposed to her. She had only a modest, though sufficient, provision for a young lady of her rank. There is in Medwin's 'Conversations' an absurd story, that on first meeting Miss Milbanke at a London rout in 1812, Byron mistook her from the simplicity of her costume for a humble companion, when Moore enlightened him on the point by saying, 'She is a great heiress, you had better marry her, and repair the old place, Newstead.' The story is fictitious in every particular. Byron first met her under Lady Melbourne's wing, well knowing her to be Lady Melbourne's niece; she had at that time no reputation for wealth; and instead of wishing Byron to marry her, Moore was one of the poet's several friends who thought her no fit match for him.

These are the facts of Miss Milbanke's position. She was the only child of a baronet of fairly good estate; but Sir Ralph Milbanke had only a life interest in the property which, on his death without male issue, would pass to the heir under the entail. He was in no position to endow his daughter largely, for he had crippled himself with electioneering expenses. Under these circumstances Miss Milbanke's assured fortune was 10,000*l.*—and no more. From her parents she looked for nothing of importance, apart from this sum. She had however 'expectations' from her uncle, Lord Wentworth, who, at the time of Byron's first offer to her, was sixty-seven years of age and likely to live for many years. She was not this uncle's only niece; and as he had the free disposal of his estate, it was conceivable that, even if she survived him, she would be none the richer for his death. Dying in 1782, one of Lord Wentworth's sisters left a son, Nathaniel Curzon (third Baron Scarsdale, who died in November 1856); a second son, William Curzon, killed at Waterloo; and Sophia Caroline Curzon (Viscountess Tamworth), who died in 1824. Thus at the time of Byron's first offer to Miss Milbanke, Lord Wentworth had two nephews and two nieces. He was known to have natural children whom he regarded affectionately. The expectations Miss Milbanke had from the uncle were not likely to inspire Lord Byron with a mercenary desire to capture her. So much for her money.—Now for her rank. On Lord Wentworth's death in 1815, the viscounty of Wentworth became extinct, whilst the barony fell into abeyance between his lordship's sister, Lady Milbanke, and his nephew the Hon. Nathaniel Curzon, afterwards third Lord Scarsdale, and it was not till this Lord Scarsdale's death in November 1856, that the poet's widow became Baroness Wentworth. It cannot be supposed that Byron was impelled to Miss Milbanke by regard for her uncertain prospect of a peerage, which did not



come to her till thirty-two years had passed over his grave,—till a time when, had he survived, he would have been sixty-eight years old. So much has been said to magnify the wealth and grandeur of the lady whom he married, and said moreover for the sake of putting Byron under something more than a suspicion of mercenary and sordid motives, that it is well for people to remember how small her fortune was, and how remote her peerage, when he first sought her hand.

Let it, also, be observed that Byron's first offer to Miss Milbanke was made at the time when Mr. Claughton's offer of 140,000*l.* for Newstead, gave him a good prospect of a sure income of 5000*l.* a-year after the payment of his debts, without selling any part of his Rochdale estate, where things were again looking brighter. Consequently the case of this proposal for marriage stands thus:—a young peer of the realm, the idol of society, the greatest poet of his time, with 5000*l.* of yearly revenue (on the settlement of his affairs), an estate in land which is expected to yield him further income in a short time, and a pen soon to earn more than 2000*l.* a-year, makes an offer of marriage to a baronet's daughter with 10,000*l.* for her immediate fortune, a prospect of something more (not much) from her father, and indefinite 'expectations' from a rich uncle, through whose death she has no hope of any considerable enrichment, so long as her mother (a hale woman, only sixty-one years old) shall be living. And yet Byron has actually been accused of mercenary motives in this business. Can it be questioned that, had he been a fortune-hunter, Byron might have carried off the wealthiest heiress in the kingdom, when he asked a lady with 10,000*l.* and shadowy 'expectations' to become his wife? Instead of being a good one, the match from a pecuniary point of view was a decidedly bad one. Indeed the badness of it was pressed upon his notice by several of his friends. In the course of events, had he lived happily with his wife, it would have proved a fairly good match—though nothing more. On making his first offer, he could not calculate on Lord Wentworth dying in 1815, and leaving between 7000*l.* and 8000*l.* a-year to his sister (Lady Milbanke) for life, with remainder to her child. On the appearance of Medwin's loose gossip, Hobhouse might well be astounded at hearing that the marriage, which proved his friend's indifference to money at that early point of his career, had been a mercenary one. How often had Hobhouse to repeat that 'Byron did *not* marry for money,'—a declaration which came from his lips whenever this meanness was charged in his hearing against the poet.

In her book of strange misconceptions and delusions, Mrs.



Beecher Stowe regards Miss Milbanke as a simple maiden of high degree who, passing her life in stately seclusion and benevolent concern for the peasantry on her father's estate, entered womanhood with no experience of the world's wickedness, and gave herself to her husband in ignorance of the sins of his youth. Having read 'Childe Harold,' and like all the other ladies of the period taken much of it as autobiography, Miss Milbanke cannot have been unaware of the difference between his former life and her own. She knew the meaning of the verses about the Paphian girls. It certainly was due to no want of frankness on his part, if she did not think him much worse than he really was. Moreover the morals of 'county society' in Durham and Yorkshire at the beginning of the present century afforded a young lady of the highest quality ample opportunities for discovering there was a morality for men and a different morality for women of their degree. Instead of being shocked by 'Childe Harold' she admired the poem greatly; and though she declined the poet's first offer, she was far from thinking him unfit to hold communion with a gentlewoman of her refinement. On the contrary, she refused him in so gentle and flattering a manner that he wished to be to her as a brother; and he had little difficulty in persuading her to receive letters from him and to answer them with sisterly trustfulness.

Perhaps it will surprise Mrs. Stowe to learn that Miss Milbanke's views of English life and character were not taken altogether from the habits of the Durham gentry and the manners of the poor on her father's estate. Though she was not so considerable a personage as her sister-in-law of Melbourne House, Lady Milbanke had her place in London society and came to town for the season; and her only daughter saw as much of people of letters, art and science, if not of people of the highest fashion, as her cousins, the Lambs. Lady Milbanke's parties were in good repute; and when she received her acquaintance, which was often, the visitor found people of mark in her drawing-rooms. Mrs. Siddons, Joanna Baillie, and Maria Edgeworth were her familiar friends. If she had not been Lady Melbourne's niece, Miss Milbanke would have heard all about Lord Byron and Lady Caroline Lamb, his doings and his worshippers, from her mother's guests, when all London was talking of the new poet and of the pains people were taking to make him a foolish one. Being Lady Melbourne's niece, Miss Milbanke—a young woman of abundant intelligence—knew well enough why her aunt was so desirous of seeing her Lady Byron.

Without being beautiful, Miss Milbanke was by no means unattractive to those who were not repelled by her formality and coldness. Simple, unaffected, and more likely to think too much than too little of her dignity, she had the air of natural refinement rather than of fashion. Her presence would have gained greatly in effectiveness by two or even three more inches in stature, but 'her figure' (to use Byron's own words) 'was perfect for her height.' Though her countenance was remarkable for the roundness, which suggested to Byron the pet-name of 'Pippin' for her, it had a piquant and sometimes slyly humorous expression. If they were wanting in regularity, her features were delicate, feminine and intellectual. There was nothing in her face to indicate hardness of nature, unless it was the placid severity it could wear to those who were distasteful to her. She was known to be clever, and well read, so far as the reading of gentlewomen went in the days of the blue-stockings. Campbell went much too far when he said that her poetry would endure comparison with her husband's. Her best verses *just* missed the goodness that would have qualified them to be compared with his worst verses. Two of the minor poems, however, of Mr. Murray's complete edition of Byron's works were certainly of her writing. At the same time her slightest and most trivial essays in poetical composition were superior to the average poetry of the 'Keepsakes' and other fashionable collections of '*Vers de Société!*'

In their ignorance of Byron, people have wondered how a woman, more remarkable for composure than loveliness, attracted Byron's attention; and in their misinformation respecting her pecuniary worth, they have escaped from the difficulty by assuming he was drawn to her by her money. In his knowledge of the poet, Harness suggested shrewdly that her coldness had a charm for him; and there is sure evidence that the suggestion was in a degree a true one. From his knowledge of himself Byron knew that an air of reserve and even of frigidity to comparative strangers did not necessarily indicate coldness of heart. He was precisely the man to be piqued by coldness to curiosity about its cause, and a desire to overcome it. Lady Caroline Lamb began in the right way when she 'turned on her heel'; two days afterwards he asked for the reason of her conduct, and the next day he called upon her and made love to her. But though she was clever enough to see the right course, Lady Caroline Lamb had not self-control and strength enough to persist in it.

There was little love between Miss Milbanke, who was by nature sincere even to faultiness, and her cousin's wife, who was



by nature an actress,—an actress of a flashy and melodramatic kind, with all her high fashion. Whilst she affected to disdain her husband's cousin, as an inferior and lamentably rustic young person, Lady Caroline Lamb secretly feared her quiet manner, calm self-dependence, and unaffected contempt for the artifices and triumphs of fashionable womankind. Miss Milbanke thought Lady Caroline a silly creature;—she even said what she thought on this point. Two words expressed Miss Milbanke's estimate of her cousin-in-law:—Beautiful Silliness. Another name Miss Milbanke invented for her fashionable cousin-by-affinity was—Fair-seeming Foolishness. And at least on one memorable occasion, Miss Milbanke told Lady Caroline that her affectation of a woe-begone, melancholy visage of Byronic grief marred the effect of her fascinating silliness. It was not long before Lady Caroline found that she had a rival in the young lady from Durham county. Whilst 'the women were suffocating' their idol, 'throwing up their heads at him,' dressing their features and toning their voices with manufactured melancholy, very much in the fashion of Mr. Gilbert's love-sick maidens, Miss Milbanke smiled at the absurdities of the Byromaniacs. When some verses of rather clever satire on the Byronic mania, after being circulated for several days about Mayfair in manuscript, found their way into the newspapers, Lady Caroline was furious,—because Byron applauded the good sense of the verses, which she suspected Miss Milbanke to have written. Whilst his fair idolaters suffocated and sickened him (to a degree Lady Caroline little imagined) with their insane worship, Miss Milbanke was one of the few women to talk to him of his poetry in a way showing they could appreciate it. But her respect for his art was curiously devoid of enthusiasm for the artist. She liked to talk with him of poetry, and showed him specimens of her own verse. But she respected poetry too much to fall at the poet's feet; she respected herself too much to become one of the apes, who tried to imitate his feeling and manner. The young man, who plumed himself on his superiority to the herd, naturally honoured the woman who showed herself superior to the mob of fashionable womankind. And as he grew more and more weary of the fantastic caprices and hysterical vehemence of the silly woman of fashion, he was more and more attracted by the composure and tranquil intellect of the clever woman of no fashion.

Byron's journals show how steadily his tender concern for Miss Milbanke deepened and strengthened throughout the two years following her refusal of his first offer, and how much his manly sentiment for her—born of judgment rather than emotion,



and fed by experience and reflection—differed from the fierce, fitful, boyish ‘passions,’ with which inferior women had inspired him. Having induced her to correspond with him (a thing he would not have done, had he not really cared for the lady of small fortune), he wrote in his journal on November 26, 1813, ‘Two letters; one from Annabella, the other from Lady Melbourne—both excellent in their respective styles. Annabella’s contained also a very pretty lyric on “Concealed Griefs”; if not her own, yet very like her. Why did she not say the stanzas were, or were not, of her own composition? I do not know whether to wish them *hers* or not. I have no great esteem for poetical persons, particularly women; they have so much of the “ideal” in *practices* as well as *ethics*.’ Four days later (November 30th, 1813) he has another letter from Miss Milbanke, and writes in his journal, ‘Yesterday, a very pretty letter from Annabella, which I answered. What an odd situation and friendship is ours!—without one spark of love on either side, and produced by circumstances which in general lead to coldness on one side and aversion on the other. She is a very superior woman, and very little spoiled, which is strange in an heiress—a girl of twenty—a peeress that is to be, in her own right—an only child and a *savante*, who has always had her own way. She is a poetess—a mathematician—a metaphysician, and yet, withal, very kind, generous, and gentle, with very little pretension. Any other head would be turned with half her acquisitions and a tenth of her advantages.’ Most readers will detect the workings of love in this memorandum,—and all the more clearly, on account of the writer’s disclaimer of every ‘spark of love.’ In February 1814, Lady Melbourne, still hopeful and wishful for the match, that would place her staid and dutiful niece between Byron and her flighty daughter-in-law, is writing with maternal kindness to the young man about his melancholy. ‘Had a note,’ he jots down in his journal on February 18th, ‘from Lady Melbourne, who says, it is said I am “much out of spirits.” I wonder if I really am or not.’ On Tuesday, March 15th, 1814, the diarist jots down this significant note, ‘A letter from Bella, which I answered. I shall be in love with her again, if I don’t take care.’ On September 15, 1814, he made his second offer to Miss Milbanke;—the offer she accepted.

Moore says that just before this offer was made, Byron was strongly urged by a lady, on whose judgment and care for his interests he relied, to propose to another lady than Miss Milbanke,—‘remarking to him, that Miss Milbanke had at present no fortune, and that his embarrassed affairs would not allow him to marry without one; that she was, moreover, a learned lady,

which would not at all suit him.' On the pecuniary ground, the advice was certainly good; and that the lady called Byron's attention to the question of money is evidence that in marrying Miss Milbanke he was not thought by 'society' to be making a fortune-hunter's match. Mr. Claughton's undertaking having by this time dropped through, and the 25,000*l.* of forfeit-money having been nearly all spent, Byron was again in trouble for money—with a revenue that still barely covered the interest of his debts, and nothing wherewith to defray his current expenses, except the literary earnings which he still declined to apply to his own needs. Under these circumstances, the match with Miss Milbanke was, in respect to money, a bad match. There were persons who thought it an almost ruinous match. But he made it;—because he was in love.

Writing from his uncertain memory (the biographer's words are '*as far as I can trust my recollection*') of a passage in the destroyed 'Memoirs,' Moore says that even at the last moment Byron relinquished his purpose of proposing to Miss Milbanke, and by the hand of his fair counsellor proposed to a lady of better fortune, and that he did not resume the relinquished purpose, and send his second proposal to his Annabella, till this mercenary offer had been declined. If the 'Memoirs' contained any story so discreditable to Byron, its presence strengthened the reasons for destroying them. It is only fair to Byron and reasonable to assume that Moore's memory (*so far as he could trust it*) was no memory at all. The anecdote, so inconsistent with the poet's contemporary memoranda and letters,—the anecdote, so vaguely recalled after several years from papers that were destroyed because they were unreliable and foolish—the anecdote, in respect to which the reporter admits he cannot trust his memory altogether, does not weaken the abundant evidence that Byron's marriage was a love-match. On the contrary, even to those who believe it, the story rather confirms the evidence that the match was *not a mariage de convenance*.

It is not wonderful that Byron—no callous, hardened, aged *roué* (as his calumniators insist), but a highly nervous and emotional young man (a boy, *ætat.* 24, 25, 26), with no sure knowledge of the world or of himself—revolted from the hysterical fervour and emotional extravagances of the fashionable ladies, and conceived that in choosing a companion for life he had better select a woman as unlike Lady Caroline Lamb as possible. For a month Lady Caroline, with her beautiful silliness, her fair-seeming foolishness, was delightful to the young man, who in the spring of his twenty-fifth



year was of course flattered, even intoxicated, by the preference shown for him by so famous a Queen of Society. At the end of six months, he had seen enough of her tears and swoonings, her caprice and gusty passionateness, her jealousies and spites, her hot fits and her hotter fits, to feel terror at imagining what would become of him were he to be linked for life to a woman of her unruly kind. Another six months, and, instead of affording him social distinction, her devotion was alternately making him ridiculous and menacing him with disaster. What more natural, than for the youthful student of life and character (with Lady Melbourne for his sympathetic adviser and 'mother') to think that, instead of mating with an impetuous and ungovernable woman, he had better mate with a woman of serene temper and well-balanced mind, who could govern herself?

All London was talking of Lady Caroline Lamb's friendship with the poet! How could it be otherwise, when from the day of her first letter to him,—an epistle in which she had offered him all her jewels, if he were in want of money,—she had seized every occasion for letting all the world know everything of the matter? As soon as he entered a room in her presence she pounced upon him as though he were her peculiar possession. On leaving one party, at which she was present, for another to which she was invited, Byron could not seat himself in his carriage without having the lady on the opposite seat of the '*vis-à-vis*.' On leaving parties, to which she had not been invited, he found her waiting for him in the street. More than once on returning home from his social diversions after midnight, Sam Rogers found Lady Caroline Lamb walking in the garden of St. James's Place, and waiting for him; her purpose being to entreat him to make up her last quarrel with Lord Byron. People asked how her husband could allow her to behave in such a way. This question could be answered only by those who knew the temper of the man (whose favourite maxim of statecraft, when he had lived to be a great statesman, was embodied in the question, 'Why can't you leave it alone?')—and who knew also the great-hearted husband's confidence in his wife's devotion to his honour. Though he knew her to be wilful, wayward, vain, wildly passionate, insanely extravagant, it never occurred to him to suspect her of disloyalty to him,—still less to imagine her capable, even in thought, of the most shameful wickedness. The Byromania was only her last mania;—like previous manias it would work itself out, if people would only leave her alone. To him it was only one of Caroline's pretty ways



when, at Lady Heathcote's ball in June 1813, she vented her fury, arising out of words with Byron, first by trying to throw herself out of a window, and then by stabbing herself—slightly (just for the scene's sake) with a supper-knife, or (as another account says) rather badly with a piece of a broken glass. It was not in every one's power to judge her so leniently as she was judged by her husband. Lady Melbourne ventured to entreat her daughter-in-law to be more careful. Lady Bessborough begged her daughter to accompany her for change of scene to Ireland. Advice so insulting, an invitation so cruel, were unendurable indignities to the lineal descendant of Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough. Hastening to Byron she told him all the barbarities done to her, simply because she loved him. The story told, she implored him to fly with her to some distant scene of tranquillity. Till she rushed in upon him with this entreaty, Byron had never fully realised what perils might arise, what an appalling catastrophe might ensue from his Platonic friendship with an extremely excitable and romantic woman of fashion. It was his duty to repel this piece of Beautiful Silliness firmly, but with such kindness and flatteries as should preserve to her a few rags of self-respect;—with kindness and flatteries that should prevent the needful repulse from overpowering her weak and heated brain, and driving her to suicide. At the interview he played a part, that made her inveigh against his coldness and sternness. Having sent her back to Melbourne House, he sent the following note after her:—

‘MY DEAREST CAROLINE,—If the tears, which you saw, and know I am not apt to shed; if the agitation in which I parted from you—agitation which, you must have perceived through the whole of this most nervous affair, did not commence till the moment of leaving you approached—if all I have said and done, and am still but too ready to say and do, have not sufficiently proved what my feelings are, and must ever be, towards you, my love, I have no other proof to offer. God knows I never knew till this moment the madness of my dearest and most beloved friend. I cannot express myself, this is no time for words—but I shall have a pride, a melancholy pleasure, in suffering what you yourself can scarcely conceive, for you do not know me. I am about to go out, with a heavy heart, for my appearing this evening will stop any absurd story to which the events of the day might give rise. Do you think *now* I am cold and stern and wilful? Will ever others think so? Will your mother ever? That mother to whom we must indeed

sacrifice much more, much more on my part than she shall ever know, or can imagine. "Promise not to love you?" Ah, Caroline, it is past promising! But I shall attribute all concessions to the proper motive, and never cease to feel all that you have already witnessed, and more than ever can be known, but to my own heart—perhaps, to yours. May God forgive, protect, and bless you ever and ever, more than ever.

'Your most attached,

'BYRON.

'P.S.—These taunts have driven you to this, my dearest Caroline, and were it not for your mother, and the kindness of your connexions, is there anything in heaven or earth that would have made me so happy as to have made you mine long ago? And not less now than then, but more than ever *at this time*. God knows I wish you happy, and when I quit you, or rather you, from a sense of duty to your husband and mother, quit me, you shall acknowledge the truth of what I again promise and vow, that no other, in word or deed, shall ever hold the place in my affections which is and shall be sacred to you till I am nothing. You know I would with pleasure give up all here or beyond the grave for you: and in refraining from this must my motives be misunderstood? I care not who knows this, what use is made of it—it is to you, and to you only, yourself. I was, and am yours, freely and entirely, to obey, to honour, love, and fly with you, *when, where, and how* yourself might and may determine.'

The copy of this letter, different in two or three particulars from all other published copies of the epistle, has been made from the original manuscript. The erased 'devoted'—erased by a single fine line—is a notable feature of the letter. It was by striking out the word 'devoted' (left clearly legible), and substituting the colder word 'attached,' that Byron defined his attitude towards the receiver of the epistle in an unmistakable manner. Was ever woman repelled more firmly and gently? Declining to fly with her, he does his utmost to make her feel as though she were declining to fly with him. Yet more, in his generosity he puts himself in her power, to the extent of enabling her to prove against him the villainy of which he had not been guilty. To relieve the repulse as far as possible of the humiliation most likely to pain her in the coming time, he penned the last sentence of the postscript (a sentence inconsistent with and contradictory to all that precedes it), so as to enable her to say truly (should she be ever taunted with the matter)

that he had declared his readiness to fly with her, *when, where,* and *how* she pleased. What written words to put in such a woman's keeping! Henceforth, by showing the concluding words of the postscript and at the same time withholding the rest of the epistle from perusal, it was in Lady Caroline Lamb's power to make any one conceive that the poet had entreated her to elope with him. What words, what a writing for her to have at hand, should she ever wish to give that impression to man or woman!

Lady Caroline Lamb told Lady Morgan, that whilst she was in Ireland with her mother, out of the way of the English hubbub about her escapades, she 'received letters constantly,—the most tender and amusing' from Byron;—the fair interpretation of the words being that she wrote Byron many letters, and he answered some of them, as civilly as he could. Certainly the last of his letters was neither amusing to her ladyship nor tender to any one. By her statement of the case in 'Glenarvon,' the letter ran thus,—'Lady Caroline Lamb,—I am no longer your lover; and since you oblige me to confess it by this truly unfeminine persecution, learn that I am attached to another, whose name it would of course be dishonest to mention. I shall ever remember with gratitude the many instances I have received of the predilection you have shown in my favour. I shall ever continue your friend, if your ladyship will permit me so to style myself. And as a first proof of my regard, I offer you this advice: correct your vanity, which is ridiculous; exert your absurd caprices on others; and leave me in peace,—Your obedient servant, Byron.'—Of course, in the novel this epistle opens with 'Lady Avondale' and ends with 'Glenarvon.' That Byron actually sent some such letter is certain; for Medwin (an honest though foolish reporter) says that Byron remarked to him of 'Glenarvon,' 'The only thing belonging to me in it is part of a letter.'

The letter came to Lady Caroline's hands in Dublin, as she was on her way back to England. 'There was,' Lady Caroline told Lady Morgan, 'a coronet on the seal. The initials under the coronet were Lady Oxford's. It was that cruel letter that I have published in "Glenarvon"; it destroyed me; I lost my brain. I was bled, leeches; kept for a week in the filthy "Dolphin" at Rock.' As she recovered her brain, and was able to continue her journey in a week, the lady's illness was not very severe. The letter is not a letter one likes to think of the poet and peer writing to a gentlewoman; but Byron's excuse is that, having vainly tried to escape from her persecution by courteous ways, he was driven to violent measures. That the



words were none too harsh was proved by her behaviour after her return to London. Driven as he was, Byron may be pardoned for writing roughly to this lady of fashion, who was capable of throwing herself into his rooms in the disguise of masculine attire (in the manner described by Lord Beaconsfield in 'Venetia') when she found his valet had been ordered to deny her admission.

But though she resented the letter, which she published under the impression she would injure the writer more than she would hurt herself by doing so, Byron's most grievous offence was that he married her cousin. For that insult she could not forgive him, till he had himself bitterly repented the imprudence. It tortured the fashionable lady's pride to think how her insignificant and lamentably rustic cousin, with her reputation for virtue and propriety and other homely qualities, had carried off the poet from all the Byromaniacal women of the great world. It exasperated her to know that this hateful match (approved and favoured by Lady Jersey) had been desired from the first and brought about at last by her mother-in-law. Of course, Lady Caroline saw the motive and end that had actuated Lady Melbourne in the business, and was properly grateful to her mother-in-law.

After Byron's fall, it was the cant of 'good society' to say that he had trifled cruelly with poor Lady Caroline's feelings. Ten years later, when she had broken her nerves by drinking brandy and laudanum, people of mode used to sigh and say, 'Ah, poor thing!—it was all that wretched Byron!' Certainly the Lambs were slow to discover that the poet trifled with this lady of their house. All through Lady Caroline's extravagant behaviour to him, Lady Melbourne treated the poet with maternal kindness. Months after the stabbing scene at Lady Heathcote's ball, Lady Melbourne is found writing to him with undiminished confidence and affection. On escaping from Lady Caroline's persecutions he married the only daughter of Lady Melbourne's brother. Lady Melbourne's treatment of the poet, and his marriage within the lines of the Lamb connexion, are evidence that he was not regarded at Melbourne House as having failed in honour or right feeling towards Lady Caroline Lamb. Nor were there any better grounds for attributing the eccentricities of the lady's behaviour in her later time to Byron's maleficent influence. She was a vain, flighty, violent creature long before she knew him. Miss Milbanke rated her as a piece of fair-seeming foolishness long before Byron saw either of the cousins. In her thirty-fifth or fortieth year she was just what she promised in her earlier and brighter time to become in her

middle age. Byron had no more to do with her later than her earlier follies. She failed early, as women of her temperament and training are wont to fail.

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## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE TURNING OF THE TIDE.

Bennet Street—Mrs. Mule—‘The Albany’—The Poet’s Clubs—‘The Giaour’—The Marquis of Sligo’s Testimony—Horsemonger Lane Gaol—The Seasons of ’13 and ’14—‘The Bride of Abydos’—‘The Corsair’—‘Anti-Byron’—Disgust for Literature—Renewal of Industry.

INSTEAD of returning to the rooms in St. James’s Street, where he awoke one morning to find himself famous, Byron, on coming up from Cheltenham to London, entered the lodgings in Bennet Street, which he occupied till the end of March 1814, when he moved into the Albany:—the precise date of the commencement of his residence in the ‘college of bachelors about town’ being given in one of his journals in these words, ‘Albany, March 28. This night got into my new apartments, rented of Lord Althorpe, on a lease of seven years. Spacious, and room for my books and sabres. *In the house*, too, another advantage. The last few days, or whole week, have been very abstemious, regular in exercise, and yet very unwell.’ Elected a member of ‘the Alfred’ before his return from Greece, the poet joined Watier’s Club, somewhere about the time of his migration from Bennet Street to the Albany. In one of his books of memoranda, quoted by Moore, Byron wrote after his withdrawal from England, ‘I belonged, or belong, to the following clubs or societies:—to the Alfred; to the Union; to Racket’s (at Brighton); to the Pugilistic; to the Owls, or “Fly-by-night”; to the *Cambridge Whig Club*; to the Harrow Club, Cambridge; and to one or two private clubs; to the Hampden (political) Club; and to the Italian Carbonari, &c., &c., “though last not least.” I got into all these, and never stood for any other—at least to my own knowledge. I declined being proposed to several others, though pressed to stand candidate.’

It was at Watier’s, soon after he joined the club, that Byron made a characteristic fish-supper on May 19, 1814, after going with Moore to ‘see Kean.’ Bitten and goaded by hunger (which he had been quickening rather than ap-

peasing for two days with biscuits and bits of gum-mastic) he came into the club, faint and famished, to devour two or three lobsters (to his own share), which he washed down with four or five ('near half-a-dozen' is Moore's expression) small liqueur-glasses of strong white brandy, drunk neat, with a draught of hot water after each dram of the spirit. 'After this,' says Moore, 'we had claret, of which having despatched two bottles between us, at about four o'clock in the morning we parted.' This may be taken as a fair example of one of the 'outbreaks'—one of the concessions to appetite—that varied at considerable intervals the poet's brave and suicidal persistence in the regimen by which he kept down his fat and destroyed his stomach.

The reader has already been told that Byron sometimes appeased the famine, ever preying on the delicate membrane of his stomach, by chewing something less cleanly than mastic. Writing to Harness on December 8, 1811, he says—'You will want to know what I am doing—chewing tobacco.' On the same day he writes to Hodgson, 'I do nothing but eschew tobacco;' a curious mistake as to the meaning of eschew, which he repeated some ten years later in 'Don Juan' (Canto xii., stanza 43):—

'In fact, there's nothing makes me so much grieve,  
As that abominable tittle-tattle,  
Which is the cud eschewed by human cattle.'

That Byron was an occasional (if not a regular) tobacco-chewer in Italy we know from Leigh Hunt's base book. Guilty of the unpleasant practice during his severe fasts, for the purpose of mitigating the pangs of hunger, from 1811 to 1824, he was, chiefly for the same purpose, a consumer of opium.

At Bennet Street Byron found the hideous old woman, Mrs. Mule, whom he took under his protection in a manner so agreeably illustrative of his affectionateness and also of his habitual kindness to his servants. During one of his transient illnesses in Bennet Street, this aged person, whose 'gaunt and witchlike appearance' made her a thing of dislike and dread to most beholders, waited on the lordly tenant of the best rooms of the Bennet Street lodging-house with a show of sympathy that stirred his grateful nature. The particulars of her services are unknown. Possibly in Fletcher's absence, she had on a sudden emergency of spasms from indigestion, to which he was liable, come opportunely upon the scene with wet cloths for hot fomentations, and had ventured to soothe the sufferer by saying, 'Dear my lord, your lordship will be easier soon!' That would have been quite enough to



make the young man regard her tenderly and feel she had a claim upon him for ever. To the surprise of his friends, who hoped to be quit of the ugly old body when he had left Bennet Street, Mrs. Mule appeared in better clothes at the Albany Chambers. A year later she shone forth in a black silk dress in the Piccadilly house, where Lord and Lady Byron played their parts in a domestic drama that will never perish from the annals of literature. On being asked by an intimate friend what on earth induced him to carry this ancient body about with him as one of his household gods, Byron answered, 'The poor old devil was so kind to me.'

Having been instructed by 'Childe Harold' to look for personal revelations in his literary productions, the readers of 'The Giaour' (published in May 1813) were quick to discover the author in one of the personages, and an episode of the poet's own history in the principal incident and positions of the 'wild and beautiful fragment' (as Moore calls it) that, containing in the first edition about four hundred lines, grew with its success till it became a poem of nearly fourteen hundred verses. It is still to be shown that the poem was based on one of the poet's adventures in Greece. The probability is that the underlying story relates to some affair, of which Byron heard when he was in Athens, and about which he made inquiries in a way that caused him to be confounded in local gossip with the heroic actor in the melodrama. Could Byron have truthfully told *of* himself the story which the Marquis of Sligo reported as being current about him after his departure from Athens, he would have certainly told it *for* himself with full particulars on his word of honour, instead of inviting the Marquis (a mere reproducer of hearsay gossip) to stand forth as sponsor for the truth of the romantic fable. The Junius mystery had produced a general appetite for literary mysteries; and to gratify this appetite popular writers, from Walter Scott to very humble fabricators of romance, were exercising their ingenuity in feats of literary mystification. The time was not far distant when Byron could without compunction send to the journals of Continental capitals pure fictions about his own doings,—fictions by the way that redounded to his dishonour instead of his credit. But though he already delighted in mystifying his readers with misleading dates and other light touches of his pen, and delighted in 'bamming' and hoaxing his hearers with piquant inventions, he had too much regard for truth and his own honour to be capable of exceeding the wide license accorded by fashion to humorous *raconteurs*, so far as to make on his honour a statement which he knew to be false. He could mystify his readers, hoax cre-

dulous quidnuncs, 'bam' dull and impertinent questioners, within the limits of the license accorded to humorous talkers. Misled by heated fancy he would misstate matters of fact. But he was incapable of lying. To persons who asked whether he really saved the wretched damsel from execution, whether he really pulled out his pistol and threatened to shoot the chief of her escort at the very jaws of death, he could not reply, 'Yes, I did.' But, having no wish to contradict the stories that exhibited him in so interesting and heroic an attitude to his Mayfair idolaters, he bethought himself of an ingenious way of avoiding the question and leaving the stories to do their work. He could say to questioners, 'You must excuse me for declining to speak of that matter, as it is a business on which I do not like to speak more than I can help. If you really wish for the particulars, go to Sligo, who will tell you all he heard of the affair immediately after I left Athens. Or, if you like, I will show you what Sligo has written to me on the subject. But you must permit me to hold my tongue on the matter.' By this means, without avouching the stories, or telling any positive untruth, he could leave his questioners under the influence of the delusions and misconceptions, in which he wished them to remain. To the last, Byron thus used the Marquis's letter, which merely states what the writer heard of certain loose and unsifted rumours. He offered to show Medwin the letter. But he never committed himself by an assertion that the rumours, mentioned in the letter, were substantially true.

Though it was no work to raise a new writer to the eminence Byron had achieved by 'Childe Harold,' the new poem was precisely the performance to enlarge the young poet's popularity and intensify the general admiration of his genius. Giving the novel-readers a romantic story, and tickling the ears that preferred to loftier and more thoughtful song the particular kind of musical verse, the poetry of sweet and delicate sounds, of which Moore was so perfect a master, 'The Giaour' was a great success. The enlarged editions followed one another rapidly; the poet throwing into each of them more and yet more verse, of animating lilt and lyric lightness. But the poem's success could not extinguish certain indications that the enthusiasm for the poet was already subsiding in that central and exclusive circle of the polite life of the capital, which claimed to be 'society' (*par excellence*, and in inverted commas). No man of his day had a finer hand or more sensitive touch for feeling the pulse of this 'inner circle' than its favourite piano-poet, Tom Moore; and on coming to town for the season of 1813, he detected signs of a disposition in certain sets and coteries of



'society' to think less cordially of the author of 'Childe Harold.' 'In the immediate circle, perhaps, around him,' says Moore, 'familiarity of intercourse might have begun to produce its usual disenchanting effects.' If the change had been only the slightest, Moore's nice discernment would have apprehended it. But if it had been only a very slight change, the biographer, retained by Byron's publisher and the world's voice to re-dress and re-paint and re-varnish the battered poet, would have been silent about the matter. It must have been a change so considerable and obvious, that the biographer felt he could not forbear from referring thus lightly to it, without exposing himself to critical censure. Moore's words are even more remarkable when he goes on to account for this change. 'His own liveliness and unreserve,' says the biographer, 'on a more intimate acquaintance, would not be long in dispelling that charm of poetic sadness, which to the eyes of distant observers hung about him; *while the romantic notions, connected by some of his fair readers with those past and nameless loves alluded to in his poems, ran some risk of abatement from too near an acquaintance with the supposed objects of his fancy and fondness at present.*'—In other words, Byron was found no more a Byromaniac than John Wilkes was a Wilkeite. On coming to know him intimately, persons who would have preferred him to resemble his melancholy poetry, were disappointed at finding him so merry, droll and loquacious; and he was at the same time suffering in the esteem of the best drawing-rooms from his devotion to Lady Oxford, and still more from his devotion to Lady Caroline Lamb. The many ladies with good reasons for disliking the Countess questioned the taste of the young nobleman who had made so poor a choice of an especial object of adoration. The *very* many ladies with *better* reasons for disliking Lady Caroline were beginning to think meanly of him for his submissiveness to the caprices of a woman, who was doing her best to make him as ridiculous as she was making herself. That the universal favour shown to Byron by society in his first season, should have waned thus perceptibly at the outset of the second season is remarkable. It is part of the evidence that society did not, as Lord Macaulay imagined, make up its mind all in a single moment to pitch the poet away like an old glove.

The season of 1813 closed with the famous 'Dandy Ball,' at which Byron was present as one of 'the dandies.' It was the season, in which he dined with Leigh Hunt in Horsemonger Lane Gaol, where the minor poet was undergoing his term of punishment for the libel on the Prince Regent. It was also the



season, that heard (on June 1st) his third, least successful and last speech in the House of Lords, in the debate on Major Cartwright's Petition. Just as the first speech was in fact a tame success (though circumstances made him for a moment think it a brilliant one), this third speech was a tame failure (though circumstances blinded him to its completeness); a failure that was another slight indication of the turning of the tide of triumph. On the occasion of the maiden speech people wanted to see and hear him; on the occasion of the third speech, the lords and their friends, without being antagonistic to him, had ceased to be curious about him, and therefore in a mild way showed they had seen and heard enough of him—at least in their chamber. Combative on the masculine side, just as he was alternately yielding and froward on the feminine side of his double nature, Byron would have justified Dr. Drury's opinion and become a great parliamentary debater, had he in his first forensic essay encountered such humiliation as would have stung him to assert his natural superiority to other men. Baffled at the outset like the younger Disraeli, he would have conquered like Beaconsfield. But in 1812 and 1813, things went smoothly with Byron, and it was only in troubled waters that he found his strength. Moreover his literary triumphs made him indifferent for the moment to political distinction. So his parliamentary career ended almost as soon as it had begun. Some one (surely, a humourist!) asked him in the November of this year to present the Debtors' Petition, and he declined to do so. 'I have,' he wrote in his journal, 'declined presenting the Debtors' Petition, being sick of parliamentary mummeries. I have spoken thrice; but I doubt my ever becoming an orator. My first was liked; the second and third—I don't know whether they succeeded or not. I have never yet set to it *con amore*;—one must have some excuse to one's self for laziness, or inability, or both, and this is mine. "Company, villainous company, hath been the spoil of me;"—and then, I have drunk medicines, not to make me love others, but certainly enough to make me hate myself.'

During this year of 1813 (and also the next) he was often at theatres, kept up his boxing and friendship with Jackson, dined with wits and statesmen, and was seen in the best of good society,—showing no disposition to go into any society, that was not good in some sense or other. In need of money for himself he always had money for others; doing several deeds of munificence to people who had only the slightest claim, or no claim whatever, upon him,—one of these latter recipients of his bounty being the paltry fellow, Ashe, whom he assisted out

of pity for him, and pitied out of disgust. At the same time, though upbraiding himself in his journals for laziness, he worked much—sometimes at high pressure. Each of the new editions of ‘The Giaour’ might be called a new poem. ‘The Bride of Abydos’ was published in December 1813; ‘The Corsair’ (with the padding of trifles at the end of the pamphlet) followed it quickly upon the turn of the year.

What induced him to put ‘Weep, daughter of a royal line,’ in that padding is unknown. The avowal of the lines could not heighten his reputation, could serve no good end, was sure to make him many dangerous enemies. Yet he reproduced them thus obtrusively;—perhaps out of generous sympathy with the other libeller of the Prince Regent, with whom he had dined in Horsemonger Lane Gaol. If the act was done out of concern for Leigh Hunt, generosity was never more completely wasted. The reckless act had the consequences he might have foreseen. Forthwith abuse of the most passionate and even virulent kind was poured upon him by newspapers especially jealous and zealous for the honour and interest of the Prince Regent. Day after day throughout successive weeks of February and March 1814, these journals poured the vials of their wrath out upon him. He was a mean creature, who had eaten his own words, in order to curry favour with powerful writers whom he had assailed in the ‘English Bards.’ He was a scribbler of poor verse, to be placed low in the list of minor poets. He was a venal poetaster, guilty of the meanness of ‘receiving and pocketing’ large sums of money from his publisher;—the rapid and prodigious sale of the last poem being pointed to as a justification of the charge. He was no less deformed in mind than he was in body. The Prince Regent almost shed tears of regret, on finding that the offensive lines, which he had attributed to Tom Moore, had been written by Byron. In his alarm at the outcry, which was no less surprising than the sale of the poem, Murray begged the poet to omit the lines from future editions of the pamphlet, and even ventured on his own authority to issue copies without the naughty verses. But Byron would not yield to the man of business. He would not withdraw the verses, and seem to be ‘shrinking and shuffling after the fuss made about them by the Tories.’ Macaulay wrote of Byron that ‘he lampooned the Prince Regent; yet he could not alienate the Tories.’ This was true in a limited sense,—but in a *very* limited sense. As a ‘ladies’ man,’ as the dandy and poet especially acceptable to women of rank, Byron still went to certain of the great Tory houses. But if he continued to receive cards from great ladies



to their routs, and had not yet provoked the Tories of high society into dropping him, he had most certainly so far alienated powerful organs of the Tory press, that they felt it their duty to educate the great body of their readers to regard him with fierce animosity. They had in truth become a great force for his overthrow.

Whilst powerful papers were denouncing him for the lampoon, another thing happened in this third season of his fame, to show Byron how the tide was now setting against him. Murray sent him the manuscript of 'Anti-Byron,' which had been offered to the publisher. No work of reckless abuse, or angry flippancy, or dull fanaticism, but a thoughtful performance, attacking the poet (as he himself wrote to Murray) 'in a manly manner and without any malicious intention,' 'Anti-Byron' was a serious exhibition of what its author deemed pernicious in the religious sentiment and in the moral and political influence of Byron's writings. 'It is not,' Byron wrote of this work to Moore on April 9, 1814, 'very scurrilous, but serious and ethereal. I never felt myself important, till I saw and heard of my being such a little Voltaire, as to induce such a production. Murray would not publish it, for which he was a fool, and so I told him; but some one else will doubtless.' In the autumn of 1812 serious ladies wanted to convert the poet to righteousness. In the spring of 1814, a book had been written to demonstrate that he was a teacher of evil.

Having no doubt that this manuscript would find a publisher, Byron cannot have supposed it would be the only book produced to discredit him. He must have foreseen the approaching storm, and felt that he was nearing the troubles predicted by Gifford. But instead of disheartening him and shaking his nerve, the prospect of the tempest seems to have inspired him with new zeal and energy. Anyhow, the man,—who at the end of April 1814, in a sudden fit of pique at the insults of certain of his anonymous assailants, and of distaste for labours that were rewarded with their abuse, had actually resolved to withdraw from literature, and ordered his publisher to stop selling his books,—now found courage to go to work on another poem. Begun towards the end of May, 'Lara' was ready for the printer,—indeed in the printer's hands and almost ready for publication—at the beginning of July. To think of the rapidity with which 'The Giaour,' 'The Bride of Abydos,' 'The Corsair,' the Napoleon 'Ode,' and 'Lara,' came from his pen, whilst he was in the quick stream of the social excitements of a man of pleasure and the world, is to be amazed at the fecundity of his genius, and of its power to achieve its ends amidst countless distractions.



## CHAPTER XV.

## BYRON'S MARRIED LIFE.

Byron's spirits during the Engagement—The Wedding at Seaham—Art of 'Bamming'—Duck, Pippin, and Goose—Quiet time at 13 Piccadilly Terrace—Lord Wentworth's Death—Matrimonial Felicity—The Poet's Will—Commencement of Bickerings—'An Unhappy sort of Life'—'Causes of Quarrel.'

ENGAGED to Miss Milbanke in September 1814, married to her in January 1815, Byron in July 1816 wrote the poem, which made the whole world think that during his engagement to Sir Ralph Milbanke's daughter his heart was in his cousin's (Mrs. Musters's) keeping,—that at the very moment when he took his bride for better and for worse, he was thinking of the Mary who ten years before had become 'another's bride.' Byron's journals and letters of 1813, 1814, and 1815, afford conclusive evidence that the autobiography of 'The Dream' was, in that matter, mere romance. Having cared enough for Miss Milbanke in 1812 to wish to make her his wife, he learnt to love her during the next two years; and having by assiduous addresses won her love in the autumn of 1814, he married her—not in a frenzy of boyish passion, but with the steadier sentiment of manly devotion.

On September 20, 1814, he writes to Moore in high spirits, 'I am going to be married—that is, I am accepted, and one usually hopes the rest will follow. My mother of the Gracchi (that *are* to be) *you* think too strait-laced for me, although the paragon of only children, and invested with "golden opinions of all sorts of men," and full of "most blest conditions" as Desdemona herself. . . . She is said to be an heiress, but of that I really know nothing certainly, and shall not inquire. But I know she has talents and excellent qualities; and you will not deny her judgment, after having refused six suitors and taken me. . . . I must, of course, reform thoroughly; and, seriously, if I can contribute to her happiness, I shall secure my own.'—To the Countess of —, he writes from the Albany on October 5, 1814, 'I am very much in love, and as silly as all single gentlemen must be in that sentimental situation; . . . all our relatives are congratulating away to right and left in a most fatiguing manner. You perhaps know the lady. She is niece to Lady Melbourne, and cousin to Lady Cowper and others of your acquaintance, and has no fault, except being a great deal too good for me, and that I must pardon, if nobody else should.

It might have happened two years ago, and, if it had, would have saved me a world of trouble.'—Again to his intimate friend, Moore, he writes on October 14, 1814, averring that he has chosen from love, not money, 'I certainly did not address Miss Milbanke with these views, but it is likely she may prove a considerable *parti*. All her father can give, or leave her, he will; and from her childless uncle, Lord Wentworth, whose barony, it is supposed, will descend on Lady Milbanke (his sister), she has expectations. But these will depend upon his own disposition, which seems very partial towards her. She is an only child, and Sir R.'s estates, though dipped by electioneering, are considerable. Part of them are settled on her; but whether *that* will be *dowered* now, I do not know,—though, from what has been intimated to me, it probably will. . . . I certainly did not dream that she was attached to me, which it seems she has been for some time. I also thought her of a very cold disposition, in which I was also mistaken—it is a long story, and I won't trouble you with it. As to her virtues, &c. &c., you will hear enough of them (for she is a kind of *pattern* in the north), without my running into a display on the subject.'—To Henry Drury, he writes on October 18, 1814, 'I am going to be married, and have been engaged this month. It is a long story, and, therefore, I won't tell it,—an old and (though I did not know it till lately) a mutual attachment.'

Are these passages (which fairly represent the tone of the letters from which they are taken) indicative of selfish greed or despondency? Would a fortune-hunter have written so carelessly and contentedly of the lady's small present fortune and uncertain expectations, and of the probability that her present fortune would be settled upon her? Would a man, dropping in a faint-hearted way into a *marriage de convenance*, have written so proudly and affectionately of the lady's virtues, of his love of her, and of his pleasure at finding that her love of him was no younger than his love of her? Moore speaks of finding the poet melancholy and despondent and restless in December, shortly before his marriage:—speaking, be it remembered, fourteen years after the marriage from memory, when events had trained the biographer to regard the wedding as a doleful business from first to last. The poet, however, may well have been anxious and troubled just then. The nervous man had cause for discomfort, on the eve of his marriage at a time of pecuniary embarrassments that made him foresee his bride's home would be besieged by bailiffs. His marriage would put him in a worse position than ever for dealing with his creditors. For he had agreed to make a large settlement on

his wife, whose trustees under the deed of settlement would for the performance of the trust have control over 60,000*l.* of the capital that should come from the sale of Newstead. Whilst Byron made this large settlement on his bride, her fortune of 10,000*l.* (which Byron is so generally believed to have squandered) was also settled upon her. Hobhouse knew all about this matter; and in answer to one of the most serious of the two or three hundred misrepresentations of Medwin's book, he wrote in the 'Westminster Review,' 'The whole of Lady Byron's fortune was put into settlement, and could not be melted away.'

Byron, with Hobhouse for his 'best man' and his travelling companion from London to the north, set out for Seaham co. Durham at the end of December 1814, and was there married to Miss Milbanke on January 2, 1815. Enough has been said to show that 'The Dream' has no autobiographical value, except as evidence of the way in which the poet was pleased to regard certain passages of his life, eighteen months after the wedding. A dream, it was as false to fact as dreams usually are. The ceremony over, and the breakfast a thing of the past, the happy pair started for Halnaby, Sir Ralph Milbanke's place near Darlington. Hobhouse handed Lady Byron to her carriage, and saw her drive off with the poet by her side; her parting words to the 'best man' being, 'If I am not happy, it will be my own fault.' Of course there was no lady's-maid in the carriage, sitting 'bodkin' between the bride and bridegroom; though Byron, no doubt, said to Medwin at Pisa in 1821, 'After the ordeal was over, we set off for a country seat of Sir Ralph's; and I was surprised at the arrangements for the journey, and somewhat out of humour to find a lady's-maid stuck between me and my bride. It was rather too early to assume the husband; so I was forced to submit, but it was not with a very good grace. Put yourself in a similar situation, and tell me if I had not some reason to be in the sulks. I have been accused of saying, on getting out of the carriage, that I had married Lady Byron out of spite, and because she had refused me twice. Though I was vexed at her prudery, or whatever you may choose to call it, if I had made so uncavalier, not to say brutal, a speech, I am convinced Lady Byron would instantly have left the carriage to me and the maid (I mean the lady's). She had spirit enough to have done so, and would properly have resented the affront.' On reading this piece of literature in Medwin's book, Hobhouse exclaimed fiercely, that Medwin was an infamous impostor. He had himself handed Lady Byron into the carriage and could swear there was no maid in it! And Hobhouse was not mistaken on the point of fact. But he was wrong in thinking Tom



Medwin an impostor. How did this invention come into Tom's book? How came Byron to put it there?

When he spoke to his especially confidential friends of Byron's most serious faults, Hobhouse used to put high in the list the poet's readiness to gossip with sycophants about his private affairs,—a failing which, though it had a show of amiability, was in truth a most hurtful weakness. Whilst the habit fed the selfishness which (according to Hobhouse) was Byron's worst and most deplorable characteristic, it was prolific of absurd stories that darkened the poet's fame. To Hobhouse it seemed that Tom Medwin was one of the sycophants who by humouring Byron's vanity led him to talk loosely; and an impostor who deliberately vamped up the poet's imprudent statements with bits of fiction, so as to impose the gossip more readily on the public.

But Shelley's familiar connexion and schoolmate—poor Tom Medwin, whilom of the 24th Light Dragoons, and in 1821 and the two following years living in Italy on insufficient means—was neither knave nor toady. A man of gentlemanly address and puerile simplicity, he was a good-tempered fool. If he had disliked this relative and hanger-on of the Shelleys, Byron—living in close intimacy with Shelley—could not have treated him with open rudeness. But Byron had a tenderness for the young man who was just then no less unfortunate than unwise. Warned by Trelawny that this inquisitive prattler was taking notes with a view to printing them, Byron answered lightly, 'So many lies are told about me that Medwin won't be believed.' And having said thus much and a little more to Trelawny, Byron took care that Medwin should not be believed:—took care that the 'notes' should comprise so large a proportion of obvious fictions, that cautious readers would not know what of their statements they might believe, would be doubtful whether they contained a single pure and unadulterated fact. In a word, Byron 'bammed' Medwin; and Medwin was a very easy man to 'bam'!

'To bam' was to hoax with a humorous fiction. The old slang word 'bam' meant a story which none but a simpleton would believe. It occurs in 'Sam Hall,' the convict's ditty that used to be encored loudly in the Cave of Harmony, when Arthur Pendennis was a young man,—

'The parson, he did come, he did come,  
And talk of "kingdom come;"  
But then it was *all bam!*'

In the days when Kit North's friends wrote their convivial articles for 'Blackwood' over their tumblers, and sometimes

under them. a reference to the art of 'bamming' was often seen in the columns of that polite magazine. At the same time the Prince Regent, a consummate master of the elegant art, made 'bamming' a favourite pastime with the gentlemen of his *entourage*. When George the Fourth entertained a dinner-table by describing gravely how he commanded-in-chief at Waterloo, he was not mad or tipsy; he was telling 'a bam' for the fun of seeing how it would be received by one of his guests, the Duke of Wellington. 'Bamming' was 'lying with a difference.' It was necessary for 'a bam' to be humorous; it might not be uttered for the teller's pecuniary benefit or for his material advantage in any way; it was needful for it to be so egregiously absurd that no one but a dullard would believe it. Byron's story about the lady's-maid was 'all bam.' Medwin having swallowed the invention, and gravely put it away for use, it is not wonderful that Byron found him a diverting companion in idle hours.

The marriage, on which Lady Melbourne had set her heart, was an accomplished fact. For the moment she could breathe freely, whilst her daughter-in-law meditated mischief and brooded over schemes of revenge. She could breathe the more freely because she sincerely believed that her niece was precisely the wife for the young man, for whom she felt genuine affection. And for a while it seemed that events would justify her opinion. The evidence of 'The Dream' notwithstanding, Byron passed his time so agreeably at Halnaby, with the lady who had carried him off from the Byromaniacs, that in the very heart of the honeymoon he could write gaily to Moore (Jan. 19, 1815), 'So you want to know about milady and me? . . . I like Bell as well as you do (or did, you villain!) Bessy—and that is (or was) saying a great deal.' On his return to Seaham, he writes to the same friend (February 2, 1815), 'Since I wrote you last, I have been transferred to my father-in-law's, with my lady and my lady's-maid, &c. &c., and the treacle-moon is over, and I am awake, and find myself married! My spouse and I agree to admiration. Swift says, "no wise man ever married;" but, for a fool, I think it the most ambrosial of all possible future states. I still think one ought to marry upon *lease*; but am very sure I should renew mine at the expiration, though next term were for ninety and nine years.' On February 10, 1815, again writing from Seaham, he says to Moore, 'Bell desires me to say all kinds of civilities, and assure you of her recognition and high consideration. . . . By the way, don't engage yourself in any travelling expedition, as I have a plan of travel into Italy, which we will discuss. And then, think of

the poesy wherewithal we should overflow, from Venice to Vesuvius, to say nothing of Greece, through all which—God willing—we might perambulate in twelve months. If I take my wife, you can take yours; and if I leave mine you may do the same.' On the day before leaving Seaham for London, with the intention of visiting Colonel and the Hon. Mrs. Leigh, at Six Mile Bottom, near Newmarket, on the road to town, he writes to Moore (March 8, 1815), 'Bell is in health, and unvaried good-humour and behaviour. But we are all in the agonies of packing and parting; and I suppose by this time to-morrow I shall be stuck in the chariot with my chin upon a band-box. I have prepared, however, another carriage for the abigail, and all the trumpery which our wives drag along with them.' If Byron was melancholy in the first nine weeks of his wedded life, and pining for 'another bride,' he hid his grief under a smiling face.

Writing to Moore from Six Mile Bottom on March 17, 1815, the young husband, touching a delicate question, says, 'To your question I can only answer that there have been some symptoms which look a little gestatory. It is a subject upon which I am not particularly anxious, except that I think it would please her uncle, Lord Wentworth, and her father and mother. The former (Lord W.) is now in town, and in very indifferent health. You, perhaps, know that his property, amounting to seven or eight thousand a-year, will eventually devolve upon Bell. But the old gentleman has been so very kind to her and me, that I hardly know how to wish him in heaven, if he can be comfortable on earth. Her father is still in the country. We mean to metropolise to-morrow, and you will address your next to Piccadilly. We have got the Duchess of Devon's house there, she being in France.'

The brief sojourn at Six Mile Bottom, under Colonel Leigh's roof, was especially agreeable to the newly-wedded couple,—Lady Byron conceiving a strong affection for Augusta Leigh, whom she approached with a strong predisposition to love as if she were really her sister, whilst Byron was delighted to see how cordially and sincerely the two women 'took to one another.' The house was none too large and the children were noisy, but the stay was enjoyable in the highest degree to both visitors. Byron had never seen much of his little, plain, dowdy-goody sister. Whilst he was on his travels and after his return to England fully occupied with literary labours, in which she felt no concern beyond a sisterly pride in their success, and with social distractions in which she was no participator, Augusta had her Cambridgeshire home, her husband, and children to engage her attention. Hence it was that, on July 8, 1813,



Byron wrote from Bennet Street to Moore, 'My sister is in town, which is a great comfort,—for, never having been much together, we are naturally more attached to each other.' Till October 16, 1814, Miss Milbanke had never either seen or written to Augusta, of whose amiability and womanly sweetness of nature she had however heard much from a common friend.

At Six Mile Bottom, Mrs. Leigh and the newly-married couple addressed one another by pet names. Whilst Byron called his wife 'Pippin' and she called him 'Duck,' they both fell into the habit of calling Augusta 'Goose,' who addressed her sister-in-law by her husband's pet name for her, but in speaking to Byron persisted in her old practice of calling him 'Baby.' Their use of these pet names—Pippin, Duck, Goose and Baby—may be taken as an indication of the affectionate heartiness and freedom from formality that characterised the intercourse of the trio.

Coming to town on March 18, 1815, in good spirits and undiminished affectionateness for one another, they settled down in the Piccadilly house, which had been lent to them by the Duchess of Devon, and had a very quiet time throughout the season. In his 'Westminster Review' article on the mis-statements of Medwin's 'Conversations,' Hobhouse said, 'Lord and Lady Byron did not give dinner-parties; they had not separate carriages; they did not launch into any extravagance.' Hobhouse's accuracy on these points is demonstrated by abundant evidence. The new chariot, which conveyed the bride and bridegroom from Durham to London, was never seen on the London pavements after that journey, until it was brought out of the coach-house on January 15, 1816, to convey Lady Byron to Kirkby Mallory. Lady Byron had this carriage at hand during her residence in 13 Piccadilly Terrace, but she never used it between her arrival at and final departure from Piccadilly. She drove about town in her husband's carriage: often driving about town *with* him, and waiting good-temperedly for the hour at a time at the doors of houses, whilst he was making calls on people whom he did not care to introduce to her, as on the occasion of his visit to Leigh Hunt at Paddington Green, when, after going by herself to buy flowers at Henderson's Nursery Ground, she sent up twice to remind her lord that she was waiting.

Several circumstances combined to make them live thus quietly. In the middle of April they went into mourning for Thomas Noel, second Viscount and ninth Baron Wentworth, who died on the seventeenth of that month, leaving the bulk of his property (from 7000*l.* to 8000*l.* a-year) entailed on his sister,

Lady Milbanke, for life, with remainder to Lady Byron and her issue; and whilst she was in mourning for so beneficent an uncle, the eventual heiress of his estate and barony could not with propriety have thrown herself into the gaieties of the London season, even if she had wished to do so. She had of course no disposition to go much at present to houses, where she would be almost sure to run across Lady Caroline Lamb. She was already in a state of health that gave her hope of becoming a mother. 'Lady Byron,' her husband wrote to Moore on June 12, 1815, 'is better than three months advanced in her progress to maternity, and, we hope, likely to go well through with it. We have been very little out this season, as I wish to keep her quiet in her present situation.' Moreover, for a peer and peeress, housed in Piccadilly, with a sufficient establishment of servants, the Byrons were as 'poor as mice.' Living with economy in Piccadilly as a married man, Byron lived at a greater cost than he had done as a bachelor of the Albany; and about 500*l.* a-year was all the immediate growth of his income from his marriage. Newstead was again in the market; but a good purchaser for so considerable an estate was not to be found in a day; and on its sale, it would devolve on the trustees of the marriage-settlement to determine how 60,000*l.* of the money paid for the property should be invested. Duns ran in upon the poet at every turn and from every quarter. Confirming them in their misconceptions respecting the change effected in their debtor's pecuniary circumstances by his marriage, Lord Wentworth's death made the poet's creditors louder and more urgent in their demands for immediate payment. How matters went in this respect at 13 Piccadilly Terrace may be conceived from the fact that there had been nine executions in the house before Lady Byron left it on January 15, 1816. No wonder that the Byrons forbore to give dinner-parties, lived economically, and did as they best could with a single pair of carriage-horses.

Annoyances and humiliations from want of money notwithstanding, the young husband and wife lived as young married folk should for four and even five months in the Duchess of Devon's house without quarrelling, or even bickering. In society Byron played the part of an idolising and triumphant husband; at home he found in Lady Byron a thoughtful and sympathetic wife, who throwing herself into his literary interests was delighted to act as his amanuensis and secretary;—her service in this respect being of great convenience to the poet, who wrote a poor hand, and on his nervous days disliked the drudgery of penmanship. During these months

she wrote several small poems, some of which he corrected,—very much of course to their improvement. They had no altercation, dispute, or difference of a serious kind, or indeed of any kind, till August.

This was the time when he was habitually so cheerful, and sometimes so hilarious in her society, that he was surprised to find her of the same opinion as those who regarded him as the victim of deep and incurable melancholy. He had been more than usually gay and brilliant in society, when his wife declared her pleasure at seeing him in such high spirits.

‘And yet, Bell,’ he said, ‘I have been called and mis-called melancholy—you must have seen how falsely, frequently.’

‘No, Byron,’ she answered, with the fine perception of wifely sympathy, ‘it is not so; at heart you are the most melancholy of mankind; and often when apparently gayest.’

If Byron had been so gloomy at his wedding as ‘The Dream’ represents, he could scarcely have been so surprised at his wife’s detection of his melancholy.

An incident of the time closely preceding the weeks in which they began to differ, deserves especial notice, as it shows how pleasantly they dwelt together up to the very threshold of their discord. Events having occurred to make it desirable that better provision should be made for the Hon. Mrs. Leigh and her children,—the lady’s husband having lately sustained losses,—Byron made the will that was proved at Doctors’ Commons, London, after his death. Disposing of the residue of his estate, after the performance of the trusts of Lady Byron’s marriage-settlement, for the benefit of his sister and her issue, the testator uses these words, ‘I make the above provision for my sister and her children, in consequence of my dear wife Lady Byron, and any children I may have, being otherwise amply provided for.’ A few days after making this will Byron told his wife the contents,—telling her at the same time of his reasons for doing so much for his dear Goose, and talking of his dear Goose’s financial anxieties and her goodness, till the tears came to his eyes, and also to the eyes of his sympathetic listener. He expressed a hope that his action would have Lady Byron’s approval, in consideration of the fact stated in the above-quoted words of the testament. The will was cordially approved by ‘Pippin’ on that ground, and for other reasons also. Despite the coldness and reserve of her manner, and notwithstanding the hard things



said of her temper, Lady Byron had a warm and generous heart, at this period of her story; and in her delight at Goose's good fortune, and also at her husband's display of brotherly affection, she declared her purpose of writing to Goose, telling her what a superlative brother her Baby was, and how cordially Pippin approved the will. It was on this occasion that Lady Byron (the cold and stony-hearted Lady Byron, as she has been called by her detractors) thanked her husband for giving her the desire of her heart,—a sister whom she could love as thoroughly as she could have loved any sister given her by her own parents. Come what might, she promised always to be kind to Augusta;—the promise of which she was in later time reminded by strange and impressive incidents, that bit the words too deep into her memory for time to be ever able to erase them from the tablet. From the day of Byron's withdrawal from England to the hour of Augusta's death, and onwards to the hour of her own death, the words lived in Lady Byron's soul. They were a living part of it. No fire of anger could kill them, no force of hatred could pluck them out of the heart into which they had grown. Again and again at critical moments of her career those words struck her with awe. They were visible to her in luminous letters in the darkness of sleepless nights. She heard them even in her deep slumber, when her spirit could not sleep.

Another incident of this point of Byron's life with his wife must be mentioned;—an incident showing how nicely considerate he was for her happiness shortly before the time when he began to show strange indifference to her feelings. Having assumed the surname of Noel, in accordance with the requirements of Lord Wentworth's will, and taken up their abode at Kirkby Mallory, Sir Ralph and Lady Milbanke (now Noel) offered Seaham to their daughter and her husband for a country residence. Made in July, this offer was accepted thankfully; and forthwith Lady Byron began to think of going to Seaham for her accouchement. Byron at the same time, with his wife's hearty concurrence, asked Tom Moore and Mrs. Moore to stay at Seaham in the course of the autumn. 'If so,' he adds, 'you and I (*without our wives*) will take a *lark* to Edinburgh and embrace Jeffrey;'—this postscript of the invitation being probably withheld from Lady Byron. A few weeks later (at the beginning of August, 1815) Byron asked his wife to invite Lady Noel to stay at Seaham in November, so as to be there during the accouchement. 'You see,' Byron

added, 'at Kirkby Mallory your mother will be so miserable about you.' Even more pleased by this nice thoughtfulness for her mother than by the suggestion itself, Pippin was a truly happy wife for a few days. And it shows the cordiality and completeness of her affection for her sister-in-law, that even in her delight at Byron's delicate mindfulness for her mother, she liked to think that Goose had suggested to him that he should put the proposal in this peculiarly agreeable way. Feminine instinct causing her to attribute to feminine influence the alleged reason for the proposal, she was *pleased* to regard Augusta as the woman who had said to him, 'To give your wife the most pleasure, you must make her think your thoughtfulness is due to your thoughtfulness for her mother; she will be more gratified by the show of consideration for her mother than by another display of consideration for herself.'

At the same time, fearful of ruffling him, possibly even of vexing him into rebellion, by any premature or indiscreet exercise of wifely authority, the young wife hoped to govern him *through* her influence over the sister who had so much influence over him. In this hope she began a practice of hinting to Mrs. Leigh what she might say to Byron on certain delicate and troubling matters. A good example of this practice is found in the way in which she confided to her sister-in-law that the frequency of Byron's visits to Melbourne House caused her uneasiness. Of course, on his coming to town, Byron went quickly to call on his wife's aunt, Lady Melbourne, his 'second mother.' He went there repeatedly. He was continually calling there. Of course, the niece had no reason to resent his dutiful and affectionate attentiveness to her aunt. But the cousin was troubled at his frequent visits to a house, where he would be so sure, or likely, to see Lady Caroline Lamb. She was jealous, but pride and prudence combined to make her desirous of concealing the jealousy from her husband. If she even hinted that he was troubling himself overmuch about her aunt, he would detect the motive of the hint, and cut her to the quick by retorting, 'You mean, your aunt's daughter-in-law. You are jealous! You distrust your husband!'—But she would escape this suspicion and imputation, and yet carry her point, if she could induce Goose to say to her Baby, 'Take care you don't go so often to Melbourne House, as to make Pippin think you have a lingering weakness for Beautiful Silliness.' And in Lady Byron's uneasiness about the visits to Melbourne House, the reader sees the first rising cloud over her domestic happiness:—a cloud from which many drops were soon to fall. When Lady

Caroline Lamb called on Lady Byron after Byron's withdrawal from England, she was received by her cousin with these words, 'I know all, Lady Caroline. He has told me all, and you could have saved me from all my misery.' It was natural for Lady Byron to take this view of her cousin's part in the dismal drama; but she probably attached too much importance to the mischief done by the mischievous woman of fashion.

But though they had no differences before August 1815, the month did not close without bickerings, and by the beginning of September the husband and wife were in the 'some time' of 'an unhappy sort of life,' described in the First Canto of 'Don Juan,'—

- 'Don José and the Donna Inez led  
For some time an unhappy sort of life,  
Wishing each other, not divorced, but dead;  
They lived respectably as man and wife,  
Their conduct was exceedingly well-bred,  
And gave no outward signs of inward strife,  
Until at length the smother'd fire broke out,  
And put the business past all kind of doubt.
- 'For Inez call'd some druggists and physicians,  
And tried to prove her loving lord was *mad*,  
But as he had some lucid intermissions,  
She next decided he was only bad;  
Yet when they ask'd her for her depositions,  
No sort of explanation could be had,  
Save that her duty both to man and God  
Required this conduct—which seem'd very odd.
- 'She kept a journal, where his faults were noted,  
And open'd certain trunks of books and letters,  
All which might, if occasion served, be quoted;  
And then she had all Seville for abettors,  
Besides her good old grandmother (who doated);  
The hearers of her case became repeaters,  
Then advocates, inquisitors, and judges,  
Some for amusement, others for old grudges.'

It is needless to say that in thus describing his domestic troubles, the poet was not severely accurate. In his talk with Medwin, Byron admitted that the spies employed to watch and gather evidence against him were Mrs. Clermont, acting on her own account, and persons obeying Mrs. Clermont's instructions. In the same talk, though he charged Lady Byron with sending the epistles to the writer's husband, he pointed to Mrs. Clermont as the person, who had broken open his writing-desk, and taken from it the letters he had received from a married woman before his marriage. He expressly acquitted Lady Byron of being accountable for the visit of Dr. Baillie and the lawyer to ascertain whether he was insane. 'I do not, however, tax Lady Byron with this transaction: probably she was not privy to it,' he is



represented as saying to the reporter who, though a simpleton, was an honest gentleman.

It is certain that Lady Byron and her husband separated on account of reasons covered by the familiar and elastic phrase 'incompatibility of temper,'—a phrase that may cover serious unkindness, scarcely a hair's-breadth short of legal cruelty. It is certain that no one of the various kinds of flagrant immorality charged against her husband by scandalous rumour was the reason why Lady Byron determined to leave him. It is certain *if* he was guilty of any one of the charges so made by report, the sin was done with a secrecy, that saved it from being an insult to his wife, and made him certain neither she nor any of her friends knew of it. On all these points fortunately for human nature there exists conclusive evidence, that will sooner or later be published to the world.

It is certain also that she did not determine to repudiate him for trivial reasons ; but for reasons so serious and weighty, that they will not be deemed positively insufficient for her justification, even by those who may on hearing them be disposed to deem them scarcely sufficient to justify her action. It is certain that from the beginning of September to the date of her accouchement,—a time when it was especially incumbent on him to make sympathetic allowance for the unevenness of her spirits, and to show her extraordinary kindness ; and afterwards from the day of her child's birth to the day of her journey to Leicestershire, he treated her with extraordinary unkindness for which her conduct afforded no sufficient excuse. It is certain that she had good reason to think he might be insane ; and instead of being singular in attributing his strange behaviour to mental disease she was countenanced in this view of his case by the poet's sister Augusta and his cousin George Byron, who were both of opinion that his conduct might possibly be due to trouble of brain, falling within the term of 'mental derangement.' On all these points, fortunately for human nature there exists evidence.

No doubt, Harness heard nonsensical stories of the poet's ill-treatment of his wife ; but however absurd they may have been in their details or from the peculiarities of the narrator, the stories about the discomfort of the lady's meals pointed to no slight matter, but to a constant source of daily and serious annoyance. Byron's alleged dislike to see women eating was probably nothing more than a poetical way of stating the fact that it irked and irritated him to see them enjoying their food, whilst he, with an ever keen appetite pinching and biting his vitals, resisted the cravings of appetite. And he was not the

man to pretend day after day at his own table, that he liked what he disliked extremely. He was not the man to put himself to the discomfort of 'making believe' that he enjoyed his dinner and chat with his wife, when he was all the while longing for the meal to be over. The consequence was that, after the earlier months of her married life, Lady Byron usually breakfasted alone, lunched alone, and dined alone,—or, what was even less cheerful, had the solitude of her meals broken by a husband who came in for a few minutes in the middle of a repast, or after showing himself at the outset of dinner ran off at the second course. Just as life's happiness is made up largely of small, daily, unremembered enjoyments, the misery of human existence is made up in a great degree of countless petty, daily, and too often bitterly remembered vexations, any one of which may be fairly termed insignificant. It follows therefore that the comfortlessness, coming to Lady Byron's life from her husband's regimen of diet, is a matter not to be overlooked, in the consideration of her position at a time, when—as a young wife, looking forward to the perils of child-birth, at a distance from the mother and father whom she loved vehemently—she had especial need of her husband's tenderest consideration and most soothing speech.

One of the earliest causes of discord between the young husband and his younger wife was his determination to leave England as soon as possible,—to breathe a warmer air, and live under bluer skies; to escape from the duns and fogs of London, and be at ease and freedom in a sunny clime. Four years since he had returned from Greece in submission to the tyranny of circumstances, with the intention of leaving England again as soon as he should settle his affairs. On February 28, 1811, he had avowed this purpose to his mother in the letter from Athens, in which he says, 'I feel myself so much a citizen of the world, that the spot where I can enjoy a delicious climate, and every luxury, at a less expense than a common college life in England, will always be a country to me; and such are in fact the shores of the Archipelago.' In the following June, he wrote to Hodgson that, 'after having a little repaired his irreparable affairs,' he would be off again to Spain or the East, where he could at least have 'cloudless skies and a cessation from impertinence.' He had no sooner relinquished his purpose of accompanying the Earl and Countess of Oxford to Sicily in the summer of 1813, than he began to lay plans for an expedition to Abyssinia. Immediately after 'the treacle-moon' at Halmaby, he invited Moore to join him in a year's tour through Italy adding significantly, 'If I take my wife, you can take yours.



Any annoyance in England made him restless ; and with him restlessness quickly shaped itself into a yearning to go abroad, to a land of sunshine, blue skies, and freedom. Moore knew there was trouble at 13 Piccadilly Terrace, on the morrow of January 5, 1816, when he read the letter ending, ' But never mind,—as somebody says, " for the blue sky bends over all ! " I only should be glad, if it bent over me where it is a little bluer ; like the " skyish top of blue Olympus," which, by the way, looked very white when I last saw it.'

Lady Byron opposed this wish to roam. She did not oppose it warmly or with excessive firmness. She only let him see that if his heart was in the East, hers was in old England, where she had a father and mother, and would soon have a nursery with a child in it. Now-a-days, with railroads and steamboats and telegraphic cables, to live in Madrid or Cairo or Athens is only to live in a rather out-of-the-way part of England. But in 1815 foreign travel was temporary expatriation. Tourists of pleasure returned from southern Europe to London, to be shocked at the gaps made in the ranks of their home-loving kindred. On preparing for his Eastern tour Byron had told his mother he had better roam the world at once, as his marriage would probably end his days and opportunities for roaming. But now that he had been married some eight or nine months ; now that his young bride was on the point of giving birth to her first child, he thought it preposterous that she should expect him to curb his passion for roaming, out of regard for her feelings. After Byron's death Hobhouse, who loved him dearly in spite of his failings, used to say that selfishness was the grand defect and blemish of his character ; and it was not in the power of the poet's closest friends to gainsay the severe judgment. It was a curious failing for a young man of vivid sensibility and generous impulses, who could not see pain or sorrow without weeping over it, who in his most urgent pecuniary straits would give a struggling author, a miserable widow, a group of wretched orphans, half his rapidly sinking balance at his bankers ;—for the young man who won the love of men, women, and thoughtless children by the completeness of his sympathy with them. But selfishness *was* Byron's grand failing. He would concede, he would give away anything except the one thing on which he had for the moment set his heart ; but as soon as any one denied him that one thing, or tried to take it from his hands, the selfishness overpowered every generous force of his nature.

Lady Byron had no sooner declared her disinclination to travel in countries far away from England, than she became a person, set on denying him enjoyment for which he yearned, a hard and



unsympathetic creature to whom he was linked for ever by that rash, fatal act—his marriage. He told her he did not wish for her company in his journeyings by sea and land. She could have her own pleasure and remain in England, whilst he would please himself at a distance from her. As she preferred her mother and father to her husband, he would not imitate her example and hinder her from pursuing happiness in her own way. But he would not be her slave any more than he would be her tyrant. He and Hobhouse would go abroad together; and before Lady Byron went to Leicestershire with her babe, Byron and Hobhouse had arranged to leave England together in the spring. The young wife saw that she was not necessary to her husband's happiness. The pleasure of touring was greater to him than the pleasure of living with her; the delight of visiting new scenes, keener than his delight in her society. All this as the time drew nearer and nearer for the birth of her child!

This difference having arisen between them, Byron and his wife daily drifted farther apart. Ceasing to trouble himself about her poetry, he was seldom present at her meals. Taking little note of her proceedings, he spent more time at the Drury Lane Theatre, where it devolved upon him (as a member of the Sub-Committee of Management,—or Mismanagement, as malicious censors averred) to confer with dramatic authors, peruse bad comedies and worse tragedies, take counsel with actors, and arbitrate on the disputes of actresses.

Working hard on his poems ('The Siege of Corinth' and 'Parisina,' written as his troubles grew thicker, passed through the printers' hands when his troubles were at their thickest), he was annoyed when his wife disturbed him at his work by coming into his room. 'Byron, I am in your way?' she inquired on one occasion, when she entered the room, and found him standing before the fire, musing on his troubles:—the answer was, 'Damnably!' After admitting that he made this unmannerly reply, the poet observed to Medwin, 'I was afterwards sorry, and reproached myself for the expression; but it escaped me unconsciously—involuntarily; I hardly knew what I said.' But he said things far more brutal and inexcusable. In her hearing he inveighed against his folly in marrying her, and vowed to extricate himself from the unendurable bondage of the union. He did worse, he himself told her that he had persisted in wooing her till he won her—not from motives of love and devotion, but from resentment and a thirst for vengeance:—an absolutely false statement that in his passionate incontinence of speech was probably made to other people. From this mad and utterly untrue speech came the revolting reports of the brutal

words said to have been spoken by him to her during the journey from Seaham to Halnaby, and in the subsequent weeks when he was overflowing with affection for her. At Venice Byron confessed to Moore that there were occasions during his life with Lady Byron when he had 'breathed the breath of bitter words.' From these examples of his more violent utterances to his young wife, it may be seen that the poet told Moore in that respect no more than the bare truth against himself. When Byron breathed the breath of bitter words, the breath was hot indeed and the words were very bitter. It has been suggested by successive writers that he frightened Lady Byron with wild fables of his wickedness. It is conceivable that he was guilty of such freaks of morbid humour, but no satisfactory evidence that he terrified her in this way has come to the writer of this page.

At other times, instead of cutting her with sharp and burning speeches, he punished her with silence. In his childhood he had been given to fits of what he styled 'silent rage;' and now, sulking and scowling all the while, he maintained an insulting and exasperating taciturnity to the victim of his wrath for days together. His violence, also, expressed itself in other ways than speech. In a sudden rage at an incident, arising out of his distress for money, he threw a favourite watch on the hearth, and then smashed it to pieces with the poker. Readers will be the better able to account for all this maniacal behaviour—the rages of false words, the rages of stubborn silence, the outpouring of wrath on a favourite watch, as though it were a living creature—when they are told that Byron was at this time (no less than in later times of his career) a laudanum-drinker.

The man, who chewed tobacco to deaden the pain of his rigorous fasting, may have had recourse to opium for the same purpose. But the practice of taking opium in some form or other was so common in the higher classes of English society from the opening of the present century till De Quincey's 'Confessions of an Opium Eater' (1822) called attention to the pernicious effects of the indulgence, that the poet may have taken his first dose of the drug at the advice of Lady Caroline Lamb (who is known to have been an habitual laudanum-drinker in her later time), or at the suggestion of some other person of fashion. The habit may have been formed in the East, and brought home with him, together with the two cantos of 'Childe Harold.' Anyhow there is the very best evidence that Byron was taking laudanum at this point of his story.—Another fact to be borne in mind respecting his condition, when other persons besides his young wife watched his eccentricities



with anxious suspicion, is that just at the opening of 1816 he was visited with jaundice. With an over-wrought brain, nerves shaken by laudanum, temper incessantly irritated by his creditors, digestive organs impaired by fasting, a liver undergoing constipation, and a mind torn and oppressed by matrimonial misadventure, he may well have said and done things for which charity would be slow to hold him accountable. People have made merry over the folly of Lady Byron's advisers in regarding his hysterical emotion, at witnessing Kean's impersonation of Sir Giles Overreach, as a matter worthy of mention in the list of sixteen symptoms of insanity; but to those who were unaware of the nervous peculiarity referred to in previous pages of this work, his overpowering agitation from so inconsiderable a cause may well have seemed worthy of medical notice.

There were numerous good reasons for his wife, in common with his sister and cousin, to attribute to mental derangement the symptoms which the men of medicine accounted for in another way. Three or four months earlier the patient had given every indication of contentment with his lot and of delight in his wife's society. Now, though she was about to present him with offspring and *by his own admission* had treated him with consistent affectionateness, he regarded her with aversion and addressed her with harshness and insult. At the beginning of August he could reflect on the previous seven months as a period of unruffled harmony, and was exulting in her generous acquiescence in the will he had made for the advantage of Augusta and her children, to the injury of his own future offspring. And now in October he was assuring her with every appearance of sincerity that he abhorred wedlock, and had married her solely from resentment and for revenge. What kindlier or more rational view could a young woman take of such behaviour than that her husband's quick and subtle genius had broken down the thin partition that was understood to divide great wits from madness? From the outset of his manly time Byron recognised an element of insanity in his mental constitution, and was now and again apprehensive that the madness would eventually conquer all the other forces of his great genius. And yet he and his friends affected to think Lady Byron guilty of monstrous impertinence in thinking him mad when he certainly behaved very much like a madman.

Shunned and harshly used by a husband, whose aversion for her caused him to look away from her or down on the carpet more often than at her when they met, Lady Byron was glad to welcome to her house her old governess, Mrs. Clermont, who came to stay with her former pupil in the midst of her trouble



and anxieties. It would not be surprising if it could be shown that, in her want of sympathy and in the absence of a more suitable confidante, Lady Byron told Mrs. Clermont too much of her griefs, and was in other respects imprudently communicative to the person, whom Byron came to regard as the principal cause of his wife's resolve to repudiate him. Evidence there doubtless is to support the general opinion that Lady Byron was guilty of a weakness, inconsistent with her abundant self-respect and habitual regard for her own dignity; but the evidence is by no means conclusive. Before one could give a confident opinion on this point, it would be necessary to know the exact time and other circumstances of the withdrawal of the letters from the poet's desk, the way in which they came to Lady Byron's hands, and the time when she sent them to the writer's husband. Byron, as readers know, acquitted his wife of, or at least forbore to charge her with, being an accomplice to the withdrawal of the letters. Moreover there are grounds for believing that at least till she went into Leicestershire, Lady Byron maintained a proper reserve to her former preceptress. Lady Byron was certainly under the impression that her parents knew nothing of her domestic troubles, when she arrived at Kirkby Mallory in January 1816; and she could scarcely have been under this impression, had she talked freely of her griefs and cares to her mother's especial and confidential dependant. That Mrs. Clermont was a vigilant, busy, prying, meddlesome, scheming, mischievous woman, as women of her years and way of living often are, is conceivable though not quite certain. Reasons altogether distinct from Byron's vulgarly abusive 'Sketch' of the woman, whose activity in his affairs caused him to say at the moment of signing the deed of separation, 'This is Mrs. Clermont's work,' make it probable that she deserved her odious name of 'the Mischief-maker.' She certainly did Byron an ill turn. But it does not follow that she was so dangerously influential over Lady Byron before the middle of January as the poet wished people to imagine. Nor does it follow that she was so completely without a natural right to be curious about his doings and meddlesome in his concerns, as he caused the world to think.

## CHAPTER XVI.

## THE SEPARATION.

Ada's Birth—Augusta the Comforter—Lady Byron's Withdrawal from London—Her case against her Husband—Written Statement for Doctor and Lawyer—Lady Noel's Interview with Dr. Lushington—Lady Byron's 'Additional Statement'—Mrs. Clermont, the Mischief-maker—Jane Clermont, Allegra's Mother—The 'Fare Thee Well'—Results of its Publication.

THE discord between Lord and Lady Byron had not diminished, when their daughter,

‘The child of love—though born in bitterness,  
And nurtured in convulsion,’

was born on December 10, 1815, and soon afterwards was christened Augusta Ada, the former of the two names being given to her in compliment to her aunt, the Hon. Mrs. Leigh, who was one of the babe's sponsors at the baptism. In those darkest days of December 1815, and January 1816, Mrs. Leigh was in her sister-in-law's house, nursing her, comforting her, encouraging her to take a hopeful view of Byron's state of health, which caused the comforter no less anxiety than it had caused the wretched wife and mother. George Byron was a frequent caller at 13 Piccadilly Terrace, and in his astonishment at the poet's recent treatment of his wife, concurred with the two ladies in thinking that the behaviour, so perplexing to persons of no medical experience, was or at least might be referable to mental illness. Bailiffs were in the house, and the post kept bringing letters to quicken Byron's anger and humiliation at his pecuniary embarrassments. On one point, at least, he showed his good sense. A house occupied by bailiffs and besieged by clamorous tradesmen being no fit abode for his wife, he begged Lady Byron to be off with her babe as soon as possible to her mother in the country; the request being made in writing on January 6, 1816; so made possibly on account of the husband's desire to avoid a personal interview with the woman who six months since had been the delight of his heart.

Lady Byron forthwith made her arrangements for the journey to Kirkby Mallory, which she deferred no later than January 15, though it was questionable whether her strength would be sufficiently restored by that time for the fatigue of travelling in so cold a season. Mrs. Leigh, who after paying her sister-in-law a long visit wished to return to her husband and children in Cambridgeshire, was entreated by Lady Byron to remain yet

a while in Piccadilly. Augusta had been her grateful sister's best comforter; Augusta could control her brother in his fits of anger; if Augusta would remain with the invalid in London, his wife at Kirkby Mallory would receive regular and reliable news of the progress, for good or ill, of affairs in London. It was by such arguments that Lady Byron induced Augusta to postpone her return to Six Mile Bottom. On January 8, 1816, after talking the matter over with Augusta and George Byron, Lady Byron consulted Dr. Baillie about her husband's state of health; but this visit to the physician was not the cause of the call he made at a later date (in the company of a lawyer) on the poet, —for which intrusion on his privacy Byron believed his wife to have been in no way accountable. The doctor's advice was that Lady Byron should go into the country in accordance with her husband's desire, and during her absence from town should write him bright and animating letters. It was arranged between Lady Byron and Augusta that they should correspond daily; so that whilst the one would know every change in her husband's case and every incident of the life in her London house, the other would be informed of every matter of Lady Byron's intercourse with her parents, having any relation to the poet's interests. The agreement of these ladies to write thus frequently and fully to one another, demonstrates the completeness of their mutual confidence, and of their wish for the greatest possible measure of sisterly intercourse at a time of the keenest anxiety to both of them.

Taking her child with her, Lady Byron left London on January 15, 1816, and entered her father's house on the following day, with the hope of having Byron with her in Leicestershire before the middle of next month. The hope cannot have been a confident one; for the view she took of his illness necessarily made her apprehensive that a month hence he might be no fit inmate for her mother's house. One of her apprehensions was that he would commit suicide. She and Augusta had more than once spoken apprehensively to George Byron about the invalid's laudanum-bottle, their fear being that he might take an over-dose of its contents. Still she left town with the hope of seeing him at Kirkby Mallory in the middle of February; for he had promised to come to her before he should go abroad: —the promise being accompanied with a very remarkable and important statement of the poet's main purpose in determining to join his wife in Leicestershire, and to stay with her there for some weeks.

Like most young husbands, with hereditary dignity to transmit to their descendants,—indeed, like most newly



married men of every social degree,—Byron had set his heart on having a son. On October 31, 1815, he had written to Moore, ‘Lady B—— is in full progress. Next month will bring to light (with the aid of “*Juno Lucina fer opem*,” or rather *opes*, for the last are most wanted) the tenth wonder of the world—Gil Blas being the eighth, and he (my son’s father) the ninth.’ His child’s sex had therefore caused Byron much disappointment, in which Lady Byron sympathised. As the peerage, to which she had a prospect of succession, would descend in the female line in case of her death without male issue, Lady Byron was less troubled than her husband at having a daughter, when a son would have been more welcome. She was however disappointed by the domestic incident, and before she left London for Kirkby Mallory was comforting herself with the hope that her next child would be a son. Byron was touched far more acutely by the misadventure; and as he was not given to hide his feelings out of regard for the feelings of others, it is not wonderful that he allowed Lady Byron to see his vexation. It is less an affair for surprise than regret that he allowed his annoyance to express itself in petulant words. Like Lady Byron, he hoped for better fortune in the coming time; and on announcing his purpose of joining her in Leicestershire, he told her that he would remain there in her society until she should be in the first stage of another progress to maternity:—an assurance that afforded her the liveliest gratification. In confidence Augusta was informed of Byron’s intention to visit Leicestershire in the ensuing month, and also of the chief purpose of the visit. After her sister-in-law’s departure, it devolved on Mrs. Leigh to use her influence over her brother to make him follow his wife to Kirkby Mallory; and for the achievement of this end, she took occasion to influence Lemann (Byron’s apothecary), through her cousin, George Byron, who received a hint that he should instruct the medical attendant to urge his patient to go into the country for his health’s sake. It follows therefore that, when she left London for Leicestershire, Lady Byron was animated by a hope, which could not have occupied her breast had she not still regarded her husband affectionately. On her way from town to Kirkby Mallory, Lady Byron wrote her husband a tender and cordial letter (beginning with ‘Dear Duck’ and signed with the pet name ‘Pippin’), and on the following day (January 16) after her arrival at her parent’s house she wrote him another epistle in the same vein of humorous fondness. This second letter was written by a wife still hopeful of seeing her husband in the course of a few weeks, in order that an heir might be

born to the Byron barony. And Lady Byron continued in this hope until she received intelligence from London that her husband, though seriously out of health, was *not* insane. Seventy years since people neither knew nor troubled themselves so much as they do now-a-days about the transmission of malady from parents to offspring. Participating in every anxiety, Mrs. Leigh was cognizant of every hope that occupied Lady Byron's mind during this season of their common trouble. 'There is no one whose society is dearer to me, or can contribute more to my happiness,' Lady Byron wrote, at the moment of leaving her husband to his sister's care, in one of her letters to Augusta, published fourteen years since in the 'Quarterly Review.' The mutual confidence of the two sisters-in-law was perfect. Eloquent of their affection for one another, the confidence was no less eloquent of the high opinion Byron's wife had of his sister's womanly discretion and womanly goodness.

When Lady Byron appeared before them at Kirkby Mallory on the 16th of January, Sir Ralph and Lady Noel saw from her looks that she was far from well. She was pale and thin; but till she spoke to them about it, they knew nothing of the anxiety that had been oppressing and fretting her for weeks and months. Before she went to bed she had told them her whole story,—withholding from them nothing of the cares she had brought with her to Leicestershire. Though she made a full statement—a *statement without a single reserve*—Lady Byron said nothing to move her parents to indignation against their child's husband. Byron was ill in body and mind, especially in mind. He was set on going abroad when he was unfit for travel. His wife was possessed by terrifying apprehensions for him. After hearing her story, *from which nothing was withheld*, Sir Ralph and Lady Noel said that Byron must be induced to come to Kirkby Mallory, where he should be considered and humoured in everything. The knowledge of the cause of any perverse humour he might display would make it impossible for Sir Ralph and Lady Noel to resent the perversity. Lady Noel, a kindly and well-intentioned woman, though excitable and passionate, made sensible suggestions of measures to be taken for the sufferer's advantage. Before their talk ended, Lady Byron and her parents came to several conclusions. It was decided that Lady Noel should write to Byron, entreating him to come to them. Respecting Byron's project for going abroad with Hobhouse, it was decided that, should it appear that the poet was in no fit state for the enterprise, it would be well for Sir Ralph and Captain Byron to wait upon Hobhouse, and give him their reasons for feeling strongly it would be hurtful to Byron to travel for the



present,—hurtful to him in respect to his domestic peace and reputation as well as his health. In the face of such a representation from Lady Byron's father and Lord Byron's nearest kinsman, Hobhouse it was thought would not venture to persist in encouraging the invalid to go abroad.

The 17th of January, 1816—the day on which Lady Noel with her daughter's concurrence wrote the kind and sympathetic letter to Byron, inviting him to Kirkby Mallory—was a day of pain and distress to Lady Byron. She had of late suffered severely from acute headache; and on this day the headache assailed her with unusual vehemence, and put her to extraordinary torture. It cheered her to know that the invitation had been despatched to Byron; and in the intervals between the neuralgic paroxysms she could look forward to the time when Byron would come to her. The next morning's post brought news from London that troubled her;—news that her husband was not insane. Lemann's report was that he detected nothing of mental derangement in his patient. The apothecary was confident that the symptoms, which had occasioned Lady Byron, Augusta and Captain Byron, so much alarm, were referable to the combined excitement and exhaustion of an overwrought brain, the excessive vexation to the patient's temper from the action of his creditors, the melancholy arising from domestic annoyances, and the disorder of the liver, now declaring itself in manifest jaundice.

On receiving this intelligence of her husband's mental soundness, Lady Byron declared that she would never live again with the man who, being sane, had treated her in a way, for which insanity alone could be pleaded as a sufficient excuse. Even yet if it could be proved that he was insane, she could live with him and love him; but should Lemann's opinion be confirmed, she would never again put herself in the power of the man who had treated her so ill. Thus the case stood on the 18th of January, when Lady Noel was making ready for her journey to London,—in the first place to consult Dr. Baillie; and then, in case Byron should be found of sound mind, to take counsel with Dr. Lushington. For the information of the physicians, and, if needful, for the instruction of the lawyer, Lady Byron made with her own pen a statement of her reasons for thinking her husband mad;—a statement that was a repetition of the matters she had told her father and mother on the 16th instant. Notwithstanding what Lady Byron wrote and published to the contrary, fourteen years later, this statement comprised (without reserve of any kind) Lady Byron's whole case against her husband, as it then stood. Thus instructed and authorised to act for her daughter,



she set forth on her mission; and for several days after their arrival in London, Lady Noel and her companion (Mrs. Clermont—the mischief-maker) were busy.

The first notable consequence of the activity of these two ladies was the visit which Dr. Baillie and the lawyer paid Lord Byron, whose treatment of them, however wanting it may have been in courtesy, satisfied the intruders that he was no madman. The physician and lawyer having no doubt on this important point, the ladies went off to Dr. Lushington, to learn whether Byron's treatment of his wife would entitle her to the benefit of judicial separation. After hearing and considering the case submitted to him by Lady Noel, who showed no disposition to exaggerate the facts, the counsel was of opinion that, though the poet's misconduct would entitle his wife to judicial separation, it was not of so heinous a kind as to render separation indispensable. It was a case for reconciliation; and the counsel wished to be of service in bringing the quarrel to an amicable conclusion. This opinion was given on what was then the whole of Lady Byron's case against her husband. The evidence is more than sufficient that she *withheld nothing* of her *original* case from her parents.

In the absence of her mother and Mrs. Clermont, Lady Byron spent doleful days and wretched nights at Kirkby Mallory. There were moments when, in alarm for her own mind, she felt she was in no fit state to have the management of herself. One day she was seen riding about the Kirkby Mallory Park at her horse's fullest gallop. On the morrow she could not leave the room, where, racked with headache and burning with fever, she alternately lay on a couch or paced over the floor,—crying to God for help, declaring she had done nothing why he should desert her. Of Byron she thought by turns bitterly and tenderly, resentfully and relentingly. To lessen her distress of heart and brain, she took pen and wrote her husband a letter of vehement feeling (the letter mentioned by previous writers about Byron), which she withheld at the last moment from the post. Had Byron come before her, with the gentlest of his smiles, the richest tones of his irresistible voice, and the light of love in his eyes, when she was penning that letter, there would have been an end to their discord. This passage of softening emotion was followed by hard moods, and gusts of anger. On being told that to get judicial separation it would perhaps be necessary for her to endure the scandal and indignity of a trial, she declared she would endure any shame rather than the misery of living with the man who had treated her so badly. When she talked vindictively of her

husband, Lady Byron's words of wrath were somewhat seasoned with self-righteousness. As for Byron's sensibility, and the pain and shame that would come to him from the scandal of separation, Lady Byron thought it was better his pride should be broken and punished in this, than in the next world. It was hard she should be made the instrument of his correction. But God's will must be done. She must do her duty. When Lady Byron had begun to think in this wild and insolent and self-righteous way, the chance was small for the speedy reconciliation of the angry husband and resentful wife.

In all this miserable business George Byron and Augusta were wholly in Lady Byron's confidence, if not wholly on her side. George Byron indeed was completely on her side. In his opinion the fault was altogether with his cousin,—none of it with his cousin's wife. And though she clung fondly to her brother, Augusta was brave enough to tell him the fault was chiefly, if not wholly, with him. Byron never in his heart forgave his cousin for siding with Lady Byron in this bitter contention; but he admired and honoured his sister more than ever, for the steadiness and courage with which she defended his wife and censured him. To the last hour of her sojourn at 13 Piccadilly Terrace, Augusta never humoured her brother by speaking a single word in censure of his wife.

One result of Lady Byron's perfect confidence in Mrs. Leigh and George Byron, was that they knew much more than the poet of his wife's doings and purposes, after the 15th of January. Byron did not know of his wife's intention to repudiate him till the 2nd of February, 1816, when he received Sir Ralph Noel's letter of proposal for an amicable separation. On that day Mrs. Leigh and her cousin, Captain George Anson Byron, R.N., had been in possession of Lady Byron's purpose for more than a week; but the cousins forbore to give Byron a hint of the course affairs had taken, thinking it best in every way that the poet should get his first knowledge of his wife's determination from her father. Consequently Augusta, still her brother's guest at 13 Piccadilly Terrace, and George Byron, a daily visitor at his cousin's house, were aware of Lady Byron's decision on this grand question some eight days before it was communicated to the person whom it concerned most deeply.

The exact date of Lady Noel's conference with Dr. Lushington is not known to the writer of this page. But the conference seems to have taken place on January 22, 1816. It cannot well have been earlier. It certainly was not later. A fortnight or three weeks later ('about a fortnight or perhaps more,' said Dr. Lushington in 1830) Lady Byron was in London with her



father on business touching the separation. It has been assumed by most of the many writers about this business, that Sir Ralph Noel was throughout the affair a mere cypher in the hands of the overbearing Lady Noel and the artful Mrs. Clermont,—and had no strong feeling on the subject. In this last respect, at least, he has been misrepresented. He was the first to cry out for the lawyer. And as soon as he had reason to think Byron sane, he became the stern censor of his only child's husband. On learning that the poet certainly was *not* mad, the baronet was pugnacious in the highest degree and would not hear of reconciliation. Lady Byron probably took her own course in the matter from first to last. But if her action was influenced by parental authority, the influence came from her father rather than her mother. If Byron knew this he never admitted it. He preferred to attribute his domestic troubles and consequent social disgrace to the rancour of two deceitful women rather than the judgment of an honourable and sensible man. Writing to Moore on February 29, 1816, when he was in the fiercest period of his first fury against Lady Noel and Mrs. Clermont, Byron said, 'My little girl is in the country, and, they tell me, is a very fine child, and now nearly three months old. Lady Noel (my mother-in-law, or, rather, *at law*) is at present overlooking it. Her daughter (Miss Milbanke that was) is, I believe, in London with her father. A Mrs. C. (now a kind of housekeeper and spy of Lady N.'s) who, in her better days, was a washerwoman, is supposed to be—by the learned—very much the occult cause of our late domestic discrepancies. In all this business I am the sorriest for Sir Ralph. He and I are equally punished, though *magis paret quam similes* in our afflictions. Yet it is hard for both to suffer for the fault of one, and so it is—I shall be separated from my wife; he will retain his.' This was Byron's way of putting his case against the women, and showing his disposition (possibly sincere) to regard Sir Ralph as his friend.

Whilst Lady Byron was in town with her father, she had an interview with Dr. Lushington, 'about a fortnight, or perhaps more, after the advocate's first interview with Lady Noel.' At that interview Lady Byron informed Dr. Lushington of facts, which the lawyer in 1830 was of opinion could not have been known to Sir Ralph. These additional facts had such an effect upon the lawyer, that, instead of continuing to regard the case as one for reconciliation, he declared that reconciliation was impossible. On receiving the same additional information, Sir Samuel Romilly underwent the same change of opinion and declared it no case for reconcilment. Writing



in 1830, fourteen years after the events, Lady Byron spoke of these additional facts, as matters she had reserved from her parents, when penning the statement for her mother to submit to medical and legal advisers in January 1816. 'She,' Lady Byron wrote in 1830 of her mother's part in the affair, 'was empowered by me to take legal opinions on a written statement of mine, though I had then reasons for reserving a part of the case from the knowledge even of my father and mother.' Writing so long after the affair with insufficient memoranda, Lady Byron may well have imagined that these additional matters were part of her original case against her husband, when in truth they came to her knowledge at some time subsequent to 15 January, 1816. The memory of the most honest witnesses is so treacherous and unreliable, that to suggest Lady Byron made this mistake in 1830 is to raise no suspicion of her general veracity, or of her *bona fides* on that particular occasion. After making her statements (of January 16 and January 18, 1816) to her parents, Lady Byron believed the statements had been explicit. Affecting to take her parents wholly into her confidence, and causing them to think themselves so treated, Lady Byron cannot have been innocent of deceit, if whilst professing to tell them everything she withheld the chief fact from them. Disregard for truth certainly was not one of Lady Byron's failings at this early stage of her career or (though she lived to say things strangely untrue) at any time of her passage through life. There is other evidence that Lady Byron's original statement to her parents was the whole of her case against her husband up to January 15, 1816. But of this evidence there is no need to give the particulars.

The additional statement, that had so great an effect on Dr. Lushington and Sir Samuel Romilly, was either a false statement (which is in the highest degree improbable), or a statement of matters that came to Lady Byron after her first communication to her parents. As the poet was living more or less under espionage, circumstances to his greater discredit with Lady Byron may well have come to her ears in the course of three or four weeks. What was the statement? By those, who gave their credulity to the monstrous invention set forth in Mrs. Beecher Stowe's book, it has been assumed that this mysterious and additional statement to Lady Byron's counsel was a communication which could not have failed to inspire the lawyer with unutterable repugnance to the Honourable Mrs. Leigh, and to make him think her unfit for the society of any Christian woman. Had the mysterious statement been what the writer of that lamentable book fancied it to be, Lady Byron would

scarcely have told Dr. Lushington, only a few days later, that she was longing to have an interview with her dear sister Augusta—her child's godmother—for the purpose of conferring with her on their domestic interests. Nor would even so courteous a gentleman as young Dr. Lushington, on receiving this piece of information, have merely advised Lady Byron to keep away from Ada's godmother, till the business of the separation was settled, lest their necessarily emotional conversation at so critical a moment should have a prejudicial effect on their future intercourse. Moreover, had the mysterious statement been what Mrs. Stowe was induced to imagine it, Lady Byron could scarcely have continued for many years to live on terms of close and affectionate intimacy with her sister-in-law, and at the same time have been able to retain the cordial sympathy and chivalric admiration of her famous lawyer.

What was the mysterious statement of which so much has been written? What were the words spoken in strict confidence by Lady Byron to Dr. Lushington, that made the advocate take another and altogether different view of his client's case? What were the facts—or the allegations which two hard-headed lawyers were content to receive as proven facts—that, besides working so great a change in the lady's legal adviser, determined the counsel on the other side (Sir Samuel Romilly) to return the fee with which he had been retained, on the ground that Lady Byron had a right to the privileges of separation, and that under the newly-discovered circumstances of the case Byron had no right to resist her demand? What were the facts or the allegations that affected Byron's own counsel in so remarkable a manner? Before an attempt is made to answer these questions, or rather to indicate the right answers to them, something must be said of two women who exercised no small influence over the poet's career.

Two ladies named Clermont are memorable personages of the Byronic story; Mrs. Clermont, the Mischief-maker, the mature woman of proverbial infamy, and Jane Clermont, the sparkling girl of fervid temper and melancholy fate, the mother of Allegra. Whilst Mrs. Clermont appeared at Lady Noel's receptions as the whilom governess of Miss Milbanke, and the gentlewoman ever in faithful attendance on Lady Byron's overbearing and rather hot-tempered mother, Jane Clermont shone as one of the beauties of a literary set, some of whose members Lady Noel condescended to favour. Of Mrs. Clermont the Mischief-maker, every one has heard from the satire Byron poured upon her, almost as much to his own discredit as to her infamy. But the poet's biographers have hitherto been strangely and



suspiciously reticent about the charming girl who gave Byron his natural daughter. The surname of these two ladies has been spelt in various ways. One comes upon it in the form of Claremont, Clairmont, and Charlemont as well as Clermont. —Jane Clermont (as her name is rightly spelt in the British Museum Catalogue), the clever and brilliant daughter of William Godwin's second wife, had no liking either for her Christian name or her surname. Dropping Jane (either because it was Christian or unromantic), she cut the second syllable from her surname, and adapting the first syllable of it to her sense of the fitness of things, called herself—Claire. A beautiful brunette, with fine though irregular features, this girl of a wayward spirit and Italian aspect called on Byron, as a person of power in the Drury Lane Theatre, when he was in the midst of his domestic troubles. Claire's purpose in the visit was to ask the poet to introduce her as an actress to the stage. The girl's name caught the ear of the poet, whose pulse always quickened at the sound of his old schoolmate's name (Clare); and the brightness of her beauty charmed his fancy.

Why Claire's application for employment on the stage was unsuccessful does not appear. Possibly Byron saw she would not make a good actress. Possibly he thought she would do better by becoming his mistress. Anyhow the poet conceived a passion for Claire; and Claire, 'holding' (as Mr. Rossetti expresses it) 'independent notions on questions such as that of marriage,' fell in love with the poet,—love that changed slowly to detestation. The day of Claire's first interview with Byron is unknown; the precise time at which she yielded to his addresses is of course unknown. Circumstances however point to some one of the earlier days of February 1816,—some day closely following on Sir Ralph Noel's announcement to Byron of his wife's desire for separation,—as the time at which the poet's brief association with William Godwin's step-daughter began. It is not very probable that it began earlier. It certainly did not begin before Lady Byron's departure from Piccadilly Terrace; though there is reason to believe that Lady Byron was ere long induced to imagine it began whilst she was in town. Partly because he felt that greater communicativeness would weaken the case against Lady Byron and put discredit on the 'Fare Thee Well,' and partly because he wished to spare the feelings of Godwin and Mrs. Shelley, Moore skates very lightly over the dangerous surface of Byron's scarcely edifying friendship with Allegra's mother. After insisting that Byron's official connexion with Drury Lane Theatre afforded nothing at which his wife could fairly take umbrage, he observes, 'The sole case



in which he afforded anything like real grounds for such an accusation did not take place till after the period of the separation.' The *period of separation* is an elastic expression. It may be taken as covering only the time between Lady Byron's journey from Piccadilly to the second day of the following month, the day on which Byron was informed of his wife's purpose to keep away from him; or it may be taken as covering the far greater time between Lady Byron's journey to the country and the 22nd of April, on which day the deed of separation was signed. In his own breast Moore used the expression in the smaller sense; whilst he intended his readers to construe it in the larger sense. Feeling it would be imprudent to make no reference to a matter which was imperfectly known to a large number of people, Moore thought it best to refer to it in a manner which would cause his readers to infer that the matter was of a time subsequent to the publication of the verses on the unforgiving wife.

Born at least as early as January 22, 1817, Allegra was no offspring of a premature birth. Leaving England on April the 25th, Byron saw nothing more of Claire till the 27th of the following month at Geneva, whither she travelled in the company of the Shelleys. Allegra's birth was due to nothing that took place after Byron's withdrawal from England. Byron had taken Claire for his goddess, and she had enjoyed his patronage for several weeks before he crossed the water from Dover to Ostend. The 'Fare Thee Well' (published in the middle of April 1816) did not set the sentimental women weeping, till the poet had for a considerable period found consolation in Claire's smiles for the cruelty of his unforgiving wife.

Whilst the poet's liaison with Jane Clermont was a new arrangement, it came to the knowledge of Mrs. Clermont, the Mischief-maker, who rendered Lord Byron the considerable dis-service, and her former pupil the questionable service of informing Lady Byron of the affair. The intelligence could not fail to incense Lady Byron. It did incense her. For though Byron could have urged in his defence, that he had not knelt to Claire till he had been discarded by his wife, the quickness with which he had found material consolation for her severity was peculiarly calculated to pique Lady Byron's self-love, quicken her animosity against him, and confirm her in her purpose of having nothing more to do with him. On coming to her knowledge, the liaison may well have been regarded by Lady Byron as a demonstration that he had never really loved her. An unsuspecting woman, in Lady Byron's position, would have been almost certain to assume that the liaison had begun

before the separation, even to assume that her husband had sent her into the country, in order that he might enjoy the society of his mistress with greater security from detection. Being of a suspicious nature, Lady Byron necessarily leapt to the erroneous conclusions to which an unsuspicious woman would have come.

Having taken this view of the liaison, it was natural for Lady Byron to place it amongst her original grounds of displeasure with her husband,—to think and speak of it as part of her original case against him.

It misses several barley-corns of certainty that Lady Byron's 'additional statement' to her counsel had reference to her husband's intimacy with Jane Clermont; and in the absence of the several barley-corns of positive evidence—likely to appear at any moment,—that would either convert a considerable body of circumstantial evidence into a perfect historic demonstration or exhibit its fallaciousness, no personal historian would be justified in offering the present suggestion as anything more than a reasonable hypothesis, countenanced by a variety of facts. Readers are therefore cautioned to take the suggestion as nothing more than a reasonable hypothesis pointing to what will probably be found in due course the true explanation of matters that have caused the world much perplexity.

The strong evidence that Lady Byron's first statement (of January 16) of her case against her husband was a full and unreserved statement, the sufficient evidence that Lady Byron's written statement (of January 18) was no less explicit and complete, and the abundant evidence that Byron's marital behaviour up to January 15 had not been faulty in any important particular (discoverable to his wife) over and above the matters set forth in the two statements, are three several bodies of testimony justifying the strongest opinion that Lady Byron's additional statement [*if a true one,—and the lady was not at that time at all likely to make an intentionally untrue one*] must have related to some matters that, besides coming to her knowledge, had taken place since her departure from London on January 15, 1816. Though the precise date of its commencement is unknown and most likely undiscoverable, Byron's intimacy with Jane Clermont *certainly* followed so closely on Lady Byron's journey to Kirkby Mallory, that it was probably known to her before she came up to town towards the middle of February to confer with Dr. Lushington. Byron knew that Lady Byron's 'additional statement' to Dr. Lushington (made towards the middle of February) was the cause of the advocate's new view of his client's case,—and the cause of Romilly's determination not to act professionally against Lady Byron's demand for a separation. Knowing this



he regarded Mrs. Clermont as the person chiefly accountable for his domestic troubles ;—as the person really accountable for the ‘additional statement’ that had operated so seriously to his disadvantage. The period of Byron’s wildest wrath against Mrs. Clermont lay midway between the middle of February, when the ‘additional statement’ was made, and the middle of April, when the ignoble ‘Sketch’ was published. On February 29, 1816, he wrote to Moore the letter of coarse abuse of Mrs. Clermont, and he dated the satire on the obscure gentlewoman March 29, 1816. He regarded Mrs. Clermont as the author of the ‘additional statement’ made a fortnight before the railing letter. She was the channel through which Lady Byron sooner or later gained her knowledge of her husband’s intimacy with Jane Clermont ;—an affair that incensed Lady Byron long after she had heard of it. If the ‘additional statement’ had reference to the Jane Clermont business, Dr. Lushington could only say to his client, ‘That being so, and your feelings being what they are, I will no longer advise you to think of reconciliation ;’ and as a man of fine feeling Romilly could only say to his client, ‘I will not be used as an instrument for forcing Lady Byron to return to a husband who knows so well how to make himself happy without her.’ Regarding her husband’s intimacy with Jane Clermont as an affair of older standing than January 15, 1816, Lady Byron (for reasons already indicated) may well have come to regard it in 1830 as part of her original case against her husband ; as something withheld from her parents in January 1816 ; as something kept back from the oral statement of January 16, and the written statement of January 18, although her first knowledge of the matter was considerably subsequent to those days. It is not difficult to imagine reasons why Lady Byron felt herself bound in honour to withhold her knowledge of the Jane Clermont affair from her parents. *If* the information, which Lady Byron withheld from her parents, related to that business, it was doubtless so withheld out of respect to the feelings and wishes of its giver, Mrs. Clermont. Several motives are conceivable, any one of which would dispose the Mischief-maker to bind her former pupil to withhold the information from her father and mother. Care for Jane’s welfare and dread of her displeasure, concern for Jane’s reputation and concern for her own advantage, may have made Mrs. Clermont urgent with Lady Byron to keep from every one but her lawyers a matter so discreditable to the girl and her connections. The Mischief-maker’s natural preference for secrecy may have been stimulated by regard for Godwin’s feelings. She may have been actuated by fear of Byron, and a nervous desire to avoid the very dis-



repute he put so ruthlessly upon her.—The large body of facts and considerations indicated in this long paragraph no doubt fall short of an historic demonstration, that Lady Byron's mysterious statement to her lawyer referred to the Jane Clermont business. But they are facts and considerations to justify a strong opinion, that a perfect exhibition of *all* the circumstances and consequences of the poet's intimacy with Jane Clermont would probably put an end to all uncertainty respecting his wife's 'additional statement' to Dr. Lushington.

Though the new love followed so closely upon the old, that prosaic persons will be disposed to think the poet cannot have suffered severely from the loss of the wife, for whom he so speedily found a substitute, it would be a mistake to regard the 'Fare Thee Well' as an altogether insincere and theatrical performance, by which Byron hoped to win sympathy for himself, and cause antipathy to the wife, against whom he was so incapable of 'rebelling.' That it was published for such ends is more than probable. That it went to the press without his authority or knowledge, through the action of an officious friend, as he meant to inform the world in his posthumous 'Memoirs,' is very much less than probable.

It can, however, be readily believed that the verses, which should have been seen by no one save the writer and the person to whom he addressed them, were the result of genuine emotion. The wife, whom he had wooed with a persistence foreign to the impetuous and gusty passions of his earlier time, may have occasioned him the disappointment that is the usual sequel of extravagant expectations; but their intercourse had been fruitful of endearments and mutual tenderness. Though she was not one of the few women, whose love is more likely to be quickened than extinguished by unkindness, she had unquestionably married him from affection. The mere vanity which has been declared her only motive in accepting him, would in so temperate a woman have been satisfied by a suit that was no secret in her circle. The offer which she declined had given her all the triumph she doubtless coveted over her rival at Melbourne House. Mere rivalry would have disposed her to decline the second offer, even as she had declined the first, rather than to accept the suitor who was not likely to revert to her married rival. On the other hand, though selfishness caused the poet to repent his marriage as soon as he was required to sacrifice his own wishes to his wife's happiness, and had chafed for a brief while under the petty vexations of conjugal bondage, it is no less certain that he also married from affection. Of course there were contributory motives and influences. But on either side

the predominant motive to this luckless union was sentimental preference. On Lady Byron's side the feeling may have been deficient in fervour and intensity, qualities not to be looked for in a woman of her tranquil and comparatively unemotional nature. On Lord Byron's side the feeling was certainly devoid—perhaps *ominously* devoid—of the tempestuous rage and sweet turbulence, which three years later made him sing on the river's brink, as he journeyed towards Bologna,

‘My blood is all meridian ; were it not,  
I had not left my clime, nor should I be,  
In spite of tortures, ne’er to be forgot,  
A slave again of love,—’

But it was no marriage of ‘convenience.’ It was as much a love-marriage on both sides as ninety-and-nine out of every hundred marriages done and celebrated with all honesty in love's name, and without a hint heard from any corner to their sentimental discredit. Lady Byron was no woman to promise to love a man, without regard to the importance of the vow. Pliable though he was in a clever woman's hands, Byron was not the man to marry a woman he didn't really care for, simply because Lady Melbourne (old enough to be his mother, as he called her:—indeed old enough to be his grandmother) wished him to do so. His letters before and after his marriage, all the circumstances of his suit to the lady, and the superabundant evidence of the harmony of their tempers during the earlier half of their term of union, put it beyond doubt that he loved her on the bridal morning, and delighted in her for several months. That she was really acceptable to him during this period of their closest intimacy is shown by his reluctance to sign the deed of separation, and shown yet more strongly by his futile attempt to lure her back to his embrace soon after his withdrawal from England, notwithstanding all the embittering humiliations which their dissension and severance had occasioned him. Had he not still felt a strong attachment to his wife, it is inconceivable that within three months of putting his hand to the deed he would, in accordance with Madame de Staël's counsel, have made overtures through a friend in England for a reconciliation. Of those overtures nothing is known positively, with the exception of their failure and his vindictive annoyance at their failure. But they must have been based on a frank admission that Lady Byron had much to forgive, and must have proceeded from a sincere yearning for restoration to her favour and companionship. They cannot have resulted from mere arguments and considerations of prudence. It is marvellous and perplexing that they should have been made so soon after the rupture which

had been fruitful of so many exasperating incidents. It was absolutely impossible for Byron to have made them, had he not found her a congenial companion, and persisted in loving her.

In the first three months of his separation from the woman for whom he felt thus strongly, memory cannot have failed to stir his sensibility with words and looks she had given him,—with pathetic scenes in which they had been the sole actors. His sensibility cannot have failed to rouse poetic fancy to play on these pictures of remembrance. Acting upon one another in their customary manner, remembrance, feeling, and imagination may well have produced the flood of tender and subduing emotions that found utterance in the valedictory verses. But though the poem may have been an outpouring of genuine feeling, it was published with a mean and malicious purpose. Given to the world as a fair statement of his case against his wife and of her case against him, it became a falsehood. The act of publication was, in truth, a crafty attempt on the poet's part to catch applause at her expense, to get advantage to himself by lowering her in the world's regard. It was an act of public war upon the woman he had injured, that changing her regard for him, determined her to change her course towards him,—and henceforth to be silent in behalf of the man who was so well qualified to be her assailant and his own defender.

On reading the pathetic verses, which brought their writer much sympathy and caused thousands of people to imagine he had been more sinned against than sinning, Madame de Staël exclaimed, 'How gladly would I have been unhappy in Lady Byron's place!' Had this woman of wit been in Lady Byron's place—had she been Lady Byron instead of Madame de Staël—she would have regarded the verses as coming from a husband who, after wooing her for two years and a half assiduously, had in nine short months found her society tame and wearisome; a husband who after living in harmony with her for seven or eight months had made her feel that his delight in possessing her was merely the delight of a child playing with a new toy; a husband who, whilst recognising her conscientious desire to please him, had told her she wasted her pains on an enterprise beyond her power; a husband who, passing abruptly from tenderness to harshness, had poured cruel speech upon her at a time when her health gave her a peculiar title to his most delicate consideration; a husband who within a few weeks of her accouchement had told her she must choose between travelling with him, or staying at home with her mother, whilst he pursued his pleasure in distant lands, where he would find life enjoyable without her; a husband who, whipped to wild fury



by her reluctance to assent to either alternative, had declared his union with her the one disastrous step of his life ; a husband who in moments of calmer malice had said he never loved her, and indeed wooed her out of spite from the date of his first offer to the date of his second proposal ; a husband who, passing from noisy rage to silent rage, had lived with her for days together in speechless gloom, and whilst persecuting her with morose taciturnity had never encountered her glance, without instantly dropping or averting his eyes in a manner eloquent of aversion. Had she been Lady Byron, and seen the verses for the first time in the author's own handwriting, Madame de Stel would have had reason for thinking it probable he had not sent them to her without first reading them, in a voice of cynical drollery, to Jane Clermont. Had she been Lady Byron, and seen the verses for the first time in a newspaper, she would have read them as an ingenious composition sent to the press for her injury by the man who, no long while since, had spoken of her as breaking her marriage-vow. Had she been fully instructed in the case, the Frenchwoman of a proud spirit and exacting temper would have been less ready to change places with Lady Byron, and less hopeful that the unforgiving wife would be induced by a few submissive and conciliatory phrases, to pillow herself once more on the breast 'where her head so oft had lain.'

Had the verses been sent by their writer to Lady Byron for her sole perusal on the 17th of March (the date assigned to them by their author), they might have made her falter, at least for a few moments, in her purpose. It is even conceivable, though improbable, that surrendering herself to their influence, she might (the Jane Clermont business notwithstanding) have answered the verses in a way that would have saved her from the imputation of 'wanting one sweet weakness—to forgive.' But their *publication* in the middle of April was an outrage she had good reason to resent. To receive such an insult tamely, to endure unresentfully so undying an injury—a wrong repeated daily throughout the world—a woman must be either the equal of the angels or much lower than sensitive and self-respecting woman-kind. To Lady Byron the outrage was the more offensive on account of what she regarded its meanness. Heretofore she had admired, loved, feared, and pitied her husband. In the season of his triumph she had regarded him with admiration, whilst holding aloof from the crowd of Byromaniacs who suffocated him with their white shoulders and foolish flatteries. In the days of his tenderness to her she had worshipped and loved him for treating her so tenderly. His outbreaks of anger and 'the breath

of his bitter words' had made her fear him. Whilst she thought him mad, she watched him with compassionate anxiety. On being assured that his violence and moodiness were not referable to insanity, she had parted from him in perplexity and dismay rather than with repugnance. In her mental narrowness she had thought him possessed by the demon of impious insolence. In her spiritual arrogance she had for a few days been disposed to regard herself as an instrument chosen by the Almighty for his humiliation. But it never occurred to her to despise him till he tried to divert from himself the unanticipated storm of obloquy, which he had provoked by his own action. She felt that if the storm had broken in thunder over her head, she would have borne all the infamy of it uncomplainingly. She scorned him for trying to turn the fury of the hurricane upon her; and in her disdain of the meanness of his design she thought, to his shame, precisely what he wrote a few months later to her discredit,

'I would not do by thee as thou hast done!'

## CHAPTER XVII.

### THE STORM.

'Simple Causes'—Lady Byron's Justification—Her abundant Frankness—The 'Quarterly Review' Letter—Byron's Surprise at his Wife's Resolve—His First Action on the Intelligence—His subsequent Behaviour—Extravagances of Social Sentiment—Observations on the 'Remarks on Don Juan'—'Glenarvon'—Lady Jersey's Farewell Party—The Poet's Withdrawal from England.

USING the word 'simple' in the sense of 'ordinary and common,' Byron remarked shortly before his death to a gentleman, who was pressing him for an avowal of the causes of his separation from Lady Byron, 'The causes, my dear sir, were too simple to be easily found out;'—words by which he wished to intimate that to discover Lady Byron's grounds for dissatisfaction with him and her reasons for repudiating him, people should seek them in matters that are the usual sources of discord to newly married couples, instead of imagining that the rupture resulted from extravagant crimes and improbable incidents. When their association has survived the first delights of novelty, it is not unusual for a newly-married couple to bicker and even to quarrel bitterly from causes that, without being trivial and altogether fanciful, are remote from the outrages which afford a young wife

the strongest justification for withdrawing from uncongenial wedlock.

Though it may be a question whether Lady Byron was justified by the circumstances of her case in breaking from her young husband, when she was aware that by doing so she would compel a man of his temperament to a life of more or less flagrant libertinism, no holder of the nicely-balanced scale can accuse her of taking so serious a step without serious provocation. As she acted from prudent and selfish care for her own comfort and happiness, she can claim none of the admiration and gratitude, that would have been her proper and glorious reward, had she preferred her husband's welfare and dignity to her own advantage. The sympathy due to her for the wretchedness, which came to her from the alliance she had not sought, is weakened almost to extinction by the recollection of the alacrity, with which she retreated from the position of trial and misery.

Finding him no worse in any other particular (probably finding a better man in *all* other particulars) than she expected to find him, she had no sooner made acquaintance with what Hobhouse used to style the poet's morbid selfishness, and the gusty violence of his temper, and ascertained those defects to be no results of insanity but the chief and incurable failings of an otherwise noble nature, than she determined to be quit of him. Wanting the sympathetic large-heartedness and moral breadth of temperament, that would have enabled her to refer his wild speech to the maddening heats of constitutional irritability, she was stung to resentment by his outrageous and absolutely truthless assertions that he had never really loved her, and had pursued her from motives of resentment and vengeance. Instead of taking these extravagant utterances seriously, and weeping over them in her solitary hours, Lady Byron would have received them with cheerily ringing laughter, would have rallied him about them with sly humour and pleasant irony in their privacy, and would even have chattered gaily and with piquant drollery about them in his hearing and presence (*never* behind his back) to her more volatile acquaintances, had she been a woman capable of controlling the humours of her lord, and 'managing the devil' that lurked in his nature,—a nature good and ill by turns. The woman is conceivable who would have made Byron a happy and good man, and won unutterable happiness to herself from the service of successful devotion to so marvellous a master; but she would have been 'the one woman of ten thousand,' and greatly unlike Lady Byron in intellect and temper. Being a fairly good woman, Lady Byron should not be blamed for not being other than she was. On the contrary, she is rather to be compas-



sionated, like all persons who have come through circumstances, rather than by voluntary intrusion, to high places for which they are singularly incompetent.

It remains, however, that she retreated from the place of trial and difficulty to please herself, *not* because she was under a clear and imperative obligation to leave it. If Byron was morbidly selfish, his wife cannot be credited with perhaps the rarest virtue—absolute unselfishness. To her advantage it may be declared on sufficient evidence that, on withdrawing as far as possible from the distasteful union, she was convinced no good would ensue to Byron from her self-sacrifice, should she constrain herself to remain with him. Recognising her complete impotence to make him happy, and believing that his grief at losing her would at the worst be nothing more serious than a transient annoyance, she resolved to escape from a companionship that, affording him no comfort, could yield her nothing but grief. Under these circumstances it certainly is not obvious that she was wrong in reverting from wedlock to singleness, and in falling back on her natural right to pursue her own happiness. Though it can never rise to rank with the virtues, selfishness is within certain limits the salutary and even sacred privilege of all human creatures. And it does not appear that Lady Byron's selfishness exceeded these limits, when she determined for her pleasure to leave for ever the husband, who for his own mere pleasure was preparing to leave her for a considerable time.

Nothing having occurred since 1816 to enlarge his knowledge of his wife's reasons for parting from him, it is remarkable that Byron spoke so confidently and precisely in 1823 of the nature of the matters, respecting which he had for years pretended to want clear and definite information. In spoken words and in written words it had for seven years been his complaint against Lady Byron and her advisers, that they had refused to tell him in what particulars he had wronged her, when he was at length moved to remark that the causes of the separation were too simple to be easily found out. Having for so long a period affected inability to account for a matter, so hurtful to his happiness and reputation, it is strange that in a sudden fit of candour and communicativeness he should almost at the last moment have admitted his sufficient knowledge of the mysterious business.

Of course there never was a moment when he needed any enlightenment on the affair. After worrying a fairly sensible woman into thinking him a madman, no sane man needs to be told why she thinks him mad. The husband, who has whipped and goaded his wife into disaffection by malicious words and

aggravating taciturnity, does not need to be informed why and how she has come to regard him with aversion. If he asks for the information, he does so from some freak of humour, from some notion of policy, from an appetite for further disputation, or from curiosity respecting her feeling on particular points of the contention;—*not* from a genuine inability to account for her disapproval of his treatment of her. When Byron, after perusing his father-in-law's letter of the 2nd of February, 1816, begged his wife to state her reasons for desiring a separation, he knew both her reasons and the reasonableness of them. And it is only fair to Lady Byron, of whose silence so much has been said by her censors, to put it upon record that in reply to the requirement she gave the needless information with abundant frankness. To the letter, in which Byron made the request for the first time by his sister's pen, Lady Byron replied in a letter published in 1869 in the 'Quarterly Review,'—

‘*Kirkby Mallory, Feb. 3rd, 1816.*

‘MY DEAREST AUGUSTA,—You are desired by your brother to ask, if my father has acted with my concurrence in proposing the separation. He has. It cannot be supposed that, in my present distressing situation, I am capable of stating in a detailed manner the reasons which will not only justify this measure, but compel me to take it; and it never can be my wish to remember unnecessarily those injuries for which, however deep, I feel no resentment. I will now only recall to Lord Byron's mind his avowed and insurmountable aversion to the married state, and the desire and determination he has expressed ever since its commencement to free himself from that bondage, as finding it quite insupportable, though candidly acknowledging that no effort of duty or affection has been wanting on my part. He has too painfully convinced me that all these attempts to contribute towards his happiness were wholly useless, and most unwelcome to him. I enclose this letter to my father, wishing it to receive his sanction.

‘Ever yours most affectionately,

‘A. I. BYRON.’

It may not be inferred from the least perspicuous sentence of this epistle (penned under circumstances sufficiently trying to account for its occasional obscurities of expression) that Byron declared his purpose of escaping from wedlock almost from the very moment of its celebration, or that it was the writer's purpose to accuse him of having done so. His gravest offence (which would have been received with laughter instead of

dismay by 'the one woman in ten thousand') against his wife was that, on coming to quarrel with her some eight months after their wedding, he declared that he *had entertained* a purpose ever since his marriage of freeing himself from its bondage. As Lady Byron cannot have intended to make Mrs. Leigh and her brother a statement, whose untruth would be obvious to both the one and the other, it may be taken for granted that on this point she only wished to inform her sister-in-law and remind her husband, that on declaring his intention to escape from domestic thralldom, he declared the resolution to have been formed at the very beginning of their union. Augusta being no less aware than her brother of the harmony of the marriage throughout the earlier months of 1815, it cannot have been Lady Byron's purpose to represent that the grossly offensive speech was made in the honeymoon. An editorial interpolation of four words (as an obvious omission) after 'he has expressed,' would give no more than the thought of the writer who must have meant to write, 'I will now only recall to Lord Byron's mind his avowed and insurmountable aversion to the married state, and the desire and determination he has expressed *himself as having entertained* ever since its commencement to free himself from that bondage.' The propriety of this emendation appears also from the fact that the letter represents the offensive speech to have been made at a time, when its utterer could speak of himself as 'finding the bondage quite insupportable,' whilst 'candidly acknowledging that no effort of duty or affection had been wanting' on the part of his wife;—a time that must have been, from the terms of the statement, considerably subsequent to the wedding. Written for persons who can 'read between the lines' and catch the precise meaning of vague and inexact expressions, domestic letters are seldom so carefully worded as official epistles. Whilst its frankness and directness indicate how little cause Byron had to charge his wife with stubbornly withholding her grounds of offence from his knowledge, the freedom and inconsideration of this epistle will prepare readers for the assurance that she was at the outset of the quarrel no more chargeable with caution than with uncommunicativeness.

Instead of returning from London to Kirkby Mallory without seeing her sister-in-law, in accordance with Dr. Lushington's prudent advice, Lady Byron sought and had a meeting with Augusta. Greeting one another with undiminished affectionateness and cordiality, the two sisters-in-law after their conversation parted in perfect friendship. Certainly Mrs. Leigh had no reason to complain of Lady Byron's dogged uncommunicative-



ness ; and it is not conceivable that Byron ventured to charge this fault upon his wife in his sister's hearing. Alluding to the smaller vexations she had endured since her marriage, in a manner to make it obvious that mere considerations of comfort and discomfort were in some degree accountable for her original determination not to return to an uncongenial association, Lady Byron admitted that she had not come to the resolve without a struggle and passages of sentimental vacillation, which of course would not have troubled her had circumstances left no other course open to her. Acknowledging her weakness in not coming to the final resolve directly and unhesitatingly, she expressed sorrow for causing Augusta and several other friends much uneasiness, which she might have spared them by action less wavering and uncertain. Of what she had suffered from Byron's ebullitions of temper and manifestations of selfishness, there was no need for her to speak to Augusta, who had been a witness of some of them, and was well aware of her brother's intention to go abroad with Hobhouse. Speaking thus frankly, she spoke with a singular appearance of freedom from the bitterness to be looked for in a person moved to a momentous conclusion by a strong sense of insult and injury. It comforted her to believe that the separation would cause Byron no acute sorrow or enduring discomfort,—that instead of regretting her as a lost delight, he would remember her only as a former burden and incumbrance. She declared that, though she might not refer his ill-treatment of her to mental derangement, which would have made it altogether blameless, she thought of all that had passed between them without resentment, and almost without a sense of injury. If there was any subject on which Lady Byron was otherwise than frank in her communications to her sister-in-law, the subject was Byron's intimacy with Jane Clermont ;—the one subject on which Byron was probably most desirous for her to be free of speech. There are reasons for the opinion that Byron's first disposition to accuse his wife and her advisers of stubborn and mysterious reticence originated in his vexation at their avoidance of the matter, which he may well have thought chiefly accountable for his wife's displeasure. But this is no question on which the present writer can speak authoritatively.

Another proof of Lady Byron's disposition to think generously of her husband and to act justly towards him, at a moment when she might be pardoned for regarding him vindictively, is found in her determination to do everything in her power to lessen the injurious effect which her action in withdrawing from him could not fail to have on his reputation. On being told

that rumour was dealing hurtfully with her husband's reputation, she resolved to give the lie to any slander that should be uttered against him in her hearing. This was certainly her spirit and purpose for some time after she decided on separating from him. And there is reason to believe that she remained in this temper and resolve, till that disastrous act of publication two months later, by which he dragged her from her privacy, and exhibited her to universal reprobation as an unforgiving woman, who, having quarrelled bitterly with her unrebelling lord on trivial matters, refused to give him again the love he longed for.

Though his wife's silence, persisted in for several days—a silence his sister could have fully accounted for, had she cared to do so—must have forewarned him of the coming trouble, and prepared him in some degree for the staggering blow, the first effect on Byron of the announcement (February 2, 1816) that his wife had resolved neither to return to him nor receive him again, was supreme and unqualified astonishment. The silence had told him that mischief was brewing. By the mysterious silence he had doubtless been caused to anticipate expostulation, and exhibitions of censure from his father-in-law and mother-in-law, with all the other disagreeable incidents of a domestic difficulty, that would not issue in an amicable arrangement, without occasioning him many vexations, much disturbance of temper, and some humiliation. But till the post brought him Sir Ralph Noel's demand for an act of separation, Byron had neither conceived nor suspected the seriousness of the situation. In his first surprise, he could not believe Lady Byron had authorised the astounding letter. Sir Ralph Noel (whom the poet regarded as a good-natured old fool) was surely the mere tool of Lady Noel and Mrs. Clermont, who had exceeded their instructions, possibly had acted without any instructions from Lady Byron, in making their puppet pen the marvellous ultimatum. This was Byron's view of the situation. It was inconceivable to him that 'Pippin' would take such extreme measures without a few preliminary intimations through the post of her serious displeasure with her 'Dearest Duck.' In a moment Augusta was ordered to write to Lady Byron in his name to ascertain whether she had authorised her father's action; and as she had for more than a week been fully informed of Pippin's purpose, and had for several days been looking for Sir Ralph's declaration of war, Mrs. Leigh may well have felt some compunction for her duplicity, if without a previous avowal of her knowledge of the real state of the case to her brother, she wrote the letter which drew from his wife the epistle set forth on a previous page of this chapter.

Dispersing the mist of egotistic moodiness that had darkened his moral vision for several months, and lifting him for a season above the depraving influence of his morbid selfishness, the shock of Sir Ralph Noel's letter startled Byron out of his meaner nature, and in a trice raised him to his better self. On realising the situation, he saw and confessed that the pain and humiliation of it were the natural consequences of his own folly and wrong-doing. Losing sight of his imaginary grievances he took a just view of his serious misconduct. At the same time he took a manly and even generous view of his wife's resentment and resolve. Without overstating the case against himself, as he was apt to do in seasons of hysterical contrition and remorseful self-introspection, he confessed that he had behaved badly, very badly, and had only himself to thank and upbraid for his misfortune. Instead of pretending that he could not account for his wife's revolt, or talking miserable nonsense about her impious violation of her matrimonial vow, or accusing her of obstinately withholding the motives and considerations of her conduct, as he did with no ordinary meanness and dishonesty a few months later, he avowed that he had treated her worse than ill, and that she showed proper spirit in rebelling against his tyranny. If he stopt short of declaring her *fully* justified for her extreme measures of retaliation, he averred stoutly that she had been driven to them by great provocation, and forbore to hint that the justification was less than complete. Forbidding his friends to offer him a suggestion to her discredit, he was no less imperative that they should urge nothing in his defence, or even in palliation of his flagrant misbehaviour.

On February 29, 1816, he wrote to Moore, 'Don't attempt to defend me. If you succeeded in that, it would be a mortal, or an immortal, offence.' To the same correspondent, who had suggested that his friend's matrimonial misadventure was due to his injudicious choice of a wife, he wrote on the 8th of March, 1816, 'The fault was *not*—no, nor even the misfortune—in my "choice" (unless in *choosing at all*)—for I do not believe—and I must say it, in the very dregs of all this bitter business—that there ever was a better, or even a brighter, a kinder, or a more amiable and agreeable being than Lady Byron. I never had, nor can have, any reproach to make her, while with me. Where there is blame, it belongs to myself, and, if I cannot redeem, I must bear it.' No person saw more of him during this period of heavy trouble and exasperating annoyances than Rogers: no one was more certain than Sam Rogers to have heard the ungenerous talk had Byron in the time of tribulation been betrayed into speaking of his wife with animosity or disparagement; and



yet he could write fearlessly and confidently to Samuel Rogers on March 25, 1816,—‘You are one of the few persons, with whom I have lived in what is called intimacy, and have heard me at times conversing on the untoward topic of my recent family disquietudes. Will you have the goodness to say to me at once, whether you ever heard me speak of her with disrespect, with unkindness, or defending myself at *her* expense by any serious imputation of any description against *her*? Did you never hear me say, “that when there was a right or a wrong, she had the *right*?” The reason I put these questions to you or others of my friends is, because I am said, by her and hers, to have resorted to such means of exculpation.—Ever very truly yours, “B.” It being in the nature of family quarrels to produce bitter and angry speech, one can readily believe that Lady Byron’s nearest relations and warmest partisans spoke ill and unjust words of Byron. In doing so they only did to his injury what he himself did to their discredit. The poet who, in the very letter of his testimony to his wife’s irreproachable goodness during their familiar association, described her ‘nearest relatives’ by epithets too violent and gross for Moore to venture to publish them, was in no position to express surprise and indignation on hearing that they spoke of him with similar extravagance. But though her closet friends doubtless thought and spoke of Byron much worse than he deserved, it is improbable that Lady Byron—ever mindful of her dignity, even to the vigilance of a jealous concern for it—was ever guilty of the same offence. Far from joining in the outcry, hourly becoming more violent against her husband, she was still in the mood to protest against its excesses of injustice. The time had not yet come for her to make the contribution of ‘speechless obloquy’ to the clamour of monstrous slanders. Byron’s note to Rogers should not be produced in evidence against her. It is, however, good evidence to the time when the poet, reverting to his former animosity against her, and dropping away from his better to his baser self, passed to the state of feeling that resulted in the publication of ‘The Farewell,’ the ‘Dream,’ and the subsequent satires on the woman, about whom he should, for his own honour’s sake, never have allowed himself to pen a single bitter verse or utter a single angry word.

It has been suggested by several of his censors that, whilst he spoke justly and even generously of the wife who had repudiated him, the poet was playing the part of a specious hypocrite, with a view to restoring himself to her favour,—that the fair words were false words, spoken only that they should be reported to her, and dispose her to condone his offences.

But the suggestion can be accepted only by persons who have still to apprehend the elementary forces and the structure of Byron's mental and moral constitution. To men of his acute sensibility and vehement temperament such hypocrisy is impossible. Insincerity might within certain limits be charged against Byron. He was capable of saying untrue things at the instigation of anger, pique, jealousy, spite,—like his monstrous assertion to his wife that he had never loved her and had married her from a vindictive motive. Sincerity was by no means an ever-present characteristic of his art. But it was not in his power to play the hypocrite consistently for any length of time. The creature of impulse and the slave of emotion, he could neither mask his stronger feelings nor even express them temperately. His insincerity was an affair more of show than reality. The natural vehemence, which made him too essentially honest for a hypocrite's career, was associated with a mobility of thought, fancy and feeling that often had the appearance and the mischievous consequences of insincerity when it was altogether devoid of falseness. A man so constituted passes quickly from mood to mood ; and the inconsistencies of his speech and action in the course of successive moods, instead of being indications of falseness and superficiality or even fickleness, are signs of his sincerity to the impressions and feelings of the moment. Such a man may be untruthful for an hour ; he may be a hypocrite for a single day,—but not for weeks together. So constituted, Byron passed quickly from love to hate, from anger to pity, from cynical hardness to cordial benevolence. In regard to his wife he went suddenly from justice and generosity to mean and malignant animosity. But he was not more genuine in the later than in the earlier stage of feeling. When he spoke of her justly he thought of her with justice ; and when he spoke of her bitterly he thought of her with bitterness. Had he in February and March been the dissembler many people have been induced to think him, he would have acted more cautiously in several particulars, and dissembling a little longer would probably have compassed what he certainly desired—reconciliation with his wife. He would have avoided the intimacy with Jane Clermont,—an affair which could not fail to confirm Lady Byron in her opinion that he had never really loved her. He would have persisted in generous speech about her for another month. He would have gone abroad without insulting her before the whole world by the publication of 'The Farewell,' and speaking in violent terms, certain to come to her knowledge, of her violation of her marriage-vow.

For some days, even for some weeks, after Sir Ralph Noel's



demand for an agreement of separation, Byron was hopeful that his wife would relent. Knowing that, so long as she remained with him, he had done her no wrong greater than the unkindness described in previous pages of this work, he could not believe that she would persist in her resolve. He was even disposed to question the sincerity of the demand, and to regard it as a mere device for bringing him to a perfect sense of his misconduct, and a proper state of contrition. On finding his wife so much in earnest as to have already taken steps for a suit in the Ecclesiastical Court, should he decline to sign the deed of liberation, he saw that he must yield to her request. It has been urged by half-a-hundred writers before Mrs. Beecher Stowe meddled so miserably with the matter, that had he not been guilty of some extravagance of immorality, far more heinous and revolting than the serious misconduct of which he had actually been guilty, he would have refused to join in the private arrangement, and insisted on a public statement and public investigation of her complaints against him. And could he have conceived all that slander would soon be saying loudly or whispering secretly to his infamy, he would probably have taken the course which, painful and inexpressibly humiliating though it would have been to him, would have revealed to the world the precise number and nature of his offences. Unforeseeing the violence of the coming storm, and the disadvantage that would come to him from the secrecy of a private submission, it is not wonderful the poet consented to liberate his wife by the process that seemed least likely to occasion enormous scandal. The circumstances of the case forbade him to hope that his wife's suit would be unsuccessful should her case go to trial. The evidence would expose him not only to the censure of rigid moralists, but to what he dreaded far more than their reprobation,—the ridicule and contempt of 'society.' Instead of being exhibited as a gay and irresistible libertine, triumphing over the virtue of women of the highest rank and fashion, he would be found guilty of the most unromantic offences, bad temper and pitifully bad manners,—would be pilloried as the ill-conditioned fellow who had worried his young bride into rebellion from spite and peevishness begotten of a disordered liver. One of the chief witnesses against him would be his own sister. Another of them would be his nearest kinsman. What could he urge against their testimony? That he had not railed at his wife, and told her he had never loved her, without provocation; that she had not been so cheerful as she ought to have been; that she had murmured occasionally at the solitariness of her meals and the discomfort of a home besieged by bailiffs; that the squabbling had not been



all on one side. Was it possible for a man of sensibility and pride to go into court with no better defence than this,—no better grounds for insisting that the woman, who had found him an unendurable companion, should return to him and his ill-humour? How could a gentleman, a man of honour, a poet, go into court with such a case to resist his wife's entreaty for liberation from insufferable bondage? There being no alternative but the private deed or the public trial, he chose the former. Clinging to the hope that his wife would relent if she had a longer time for consideration, he delayed to do what was required of him. He parleyed with Sir Ralph Noel and wrangled with the lawyers. He asked them for particulars of Lady Byron's grievances; a request that of course only elicited the assurance that the particulars (known of course to him, quite as well as they were known to the lawyers) would be produced in Doctors' Commons, should the case go to trial. He wished for the 'specific charges in a tangible shape;' not because he needed further information respecting the charges, but because Lady Byron's sufficiently communicative letter *to* her sister-in-law and *through* her *to* him, was no such document as he could use in literary and open warfare against her advisers. At length, yielding to the force of cruel circumstances, he put his hand to the deed on the 22nd of April, 1816, at a moment when he may well have felt that by forbearing to force the Noels into the ecclesiastical court he was giving up his best and last chance of checking the turbulent and seething flood of slander, that was sweeping over his reputation, and carrying away all his just claims to sympathy.

To account for that flood of wild and clamorous calumny, several things must be taken into consideration, some of them being at the first glance matters of such small moment that it is not wonderful they have escaped due attention. In its brightest hour, when no dissentient voices were audible in the acclamations rendered to the poet's genius, shrewd and calm observers of the social ferment would have predicted that so enthusiastic a triumph would be followed at no distant date by a reaction of feeling,—a reaction in which the multitude would be as quick to detect the failings as it had been zealous in magnifying the virtues of its former idol. The qualities of the man and his writings, the circumstances of his personal career and the peculiarities of the promise of his genius intimated that praise so passionate would ere long be succeeded by wilder and even more violent blame. The receiver of this tempestuous worship was a satirist, a dandy, and a poet. He was a satirist who had wounded the self-love of an army of writers, greedy for applause, hungering for the homage lavished on the competitor whose fame was the growth

of a single morning, and longing for a safe opportunity to wreak their resentment on the wit who had exhibited them to derision. He was a dandy who, though he could not dance, had captivated women of fashion and become the ball-room star of his particular season, before the peerless Brummell had declared him 'incomparable.' He was a poet who had questioned the immortality of the soul and hinted that Christianity was a delusion. Satirists are universally hated. Tolerated only in their own small and super-elegant coteries, the dandies even in their palmiest time were the aversion of ordinary Englishmen. Poets are the objects of masculine distrust in proportion as they are the objects of feminine confidence and approval. Was it possible for such a satirist, dandy and poet as the author of 'Childe Harold,' to escape enmity, jealousy, dislike and suspicion?

Too young to be acceptable to men of years and experience, too triumphant not to be envied by men of every age, too great not to be cordially detested by the small and ignoble of his own sex, Byron rated ordinary men at less than their proper worth, and without intending to treat them insolently, on the contrary whilst often going out of his way to please them and do them good service, allowed them to see he held them of small account. Whilst so considerable a man as Hazlitt was nettled by the young poet into styling him 'a sublime coxcomb,' hundreds of inconsiderable men were piqued into calling him 'an arrant puppy.' Byron's eccentricities were peculiarly irritating to large numbers of men who ridiculed them all the more roundly and with easier conscience, because they had so strong an appearance of being affectations. Even in this era of universal tolerance and indifference, when wine-drinkers and water-drinkers tipple together with gushing good fellowship, and vegetarians live in charity with devourers of venison, antagonisms spring from difference of taste in trifles more often than from difference of opinion on matters of importance. In the 'port-wine and beef-steak days' of 'the Regency,' social feeling was apt to run strongly against gentlemen who fed sparingly, and either would not or could not carry their two bottles daily from the dinner-table to the whist-table. Byron's system of diet (carried out with needless ostentation and aggressiveness) was scarcely more injurious to his stomach than it was to his character with honest gentlemen, who sniffed treason and every form of social mutiny in the pale poet, capable of sustaining life on biscuits and soda-water. On questions of amusement Byron was at war with men of every country-house he visited. The sentimentalist, who shed tears and wrote poetically about the eye of a wounded eaglet, detested field-sports for their cruelty. Riding fairly well (on such horses, by



the way, as provoked Trelawny's derision), Byron seldom rode to hounds. A good marksman with the pistol, he fired away in the garden at five-shilling pieces, whilst the barbarians were slaughtering the pheasants. Under any circumstances such a young lord would have been unacceptable to the men who rose every morning from their beds to exclaim 'Go to, let us kill something.' Whilst these men—a powerful factor of social opinion in the aristocratic classes of English society—regarded the poet coldly or with positive antipathy for disliking the sports in which they delighted, the favour shown him by their womankind made him an object of their jealousy and suspicion. Whilst the women pressed towards and thronged about him in the drawing-rooms, the men scowled at him, and muttered deep curses on the folly of his idolaters and on the arts by which he maintained his power over them. Ponsonbys and Lambs were not the only men to wish devoutly that some breeze, ill for him and good for them, would blow the verse-writing dandy to the devil, and rid them of the sentimentalist who made their wives and sisters so ridiculous—so heedless of their dignity and even of their honour. Worrying the men by his method and address with their women, Byron at the same time exasperated them by his political views, sympathies, and preferences. Whilst nine out of every ten Englishmen regarded Buonaparte as the incarnation of evil, the poet declared in the very teeth of foaming patriots his admiration for the Corsican adventurer. In days when nine out of every ten Englishmen were ready on the slightest provocation to call Washington a successful traitor and the American republic a federation of rebellious planters, Byron rated the American 'Pater Patriæ' as the greatest, brightest, and loftiest of heroes. Worse still, at a time when for the sake of social order people of good breeding and loyal nature were required to look away from the failings and magnify the virtues of all persons in supreme authority, the peer of Great Britain, who exulted in Napoleon's escape from Elba and worshipped the Cincinnatus of the West, had ventured to exercise his dangerous faculty of verse in lampooning the Prince Regent. It has been shown how that lampoon alienated from the poet certain powerful organs of the Tory press, that had previously commended the productions of his genius. For more than two years those journalists had been educating their readers—no small or powerless portion of the entire community—to underrate his poetry and exaggerate his political maleficence. And now that the scandal of his rupture with a young wife, who had long enjoyed a singular reputation for feminine excellence, gave them a convenient occasion and safe pretext for breaking from his



acquaintance and excluding him from their houses, men of high rank and influence in the Tory connexion were quick to reveal how completely they also had been alienated from him by his political indiscretions and extravagances. At the same time he was regarded with coldness, or warm hostility by the Whigs to whom he had for some time been an embarrassment, and now promised to become a source of serious scandal. Several of the Whig families wished him out of the way,—at least for a time. Lord Beaconsfield was fully justified in representing in ‘*Venetia*’ that at the very moment of the poet’s fall, there was less disposition within his own party than in the ranks of its opponents to moderate the catastrophe.

Religious organizations are not readily moved, and when put in movement they are not soon brought to rest. Religious opinion is not formed in a day. On the contrary it requires so considerable a period for its gradual development, that four years were all too brief a term for the ferment, which the theology of ‘*Childe Harold*’ could not fail to occasion throughout the country—the ferment, whose first indications reached Byron in the autumn of 1812—to find adequate expression. The religious circles of the provincial towns and rural villages were still forming their judgment on the poet’s greatest literary achievement, were still moving to their universal verdict that the book was supremely mischievous, when it was announced that its writer, whose dissoluteness was paraded in his poisonous verse, had returned to the profligacy which he had described himself as quitting from transient satiety rather than from sincere penitence. And in considering how the general disapproval of the poet’s religious heterodoxy affected the general view of his domestic troubles, the reader should remember how closely scepticism and immorality were associated in the popular imagination throughout the earlier decades of the present century. In these days we have amongst us a small though considerable minority of people, not unwilling to think, and not incapable of thinking that moral rectitude is quite as likely to prevail in persons, whose strongest hope of future happiness depends on their present devotion to goodness, as in persons who are likely to be inspired by misapprehended doctrine with a notion that it matters little how wrongly they act towards their neighbours, provided they think rightly on matters of creed. But when ‘*Childe Harold*’ was new literature, the Englishmen who held any such opinion could be almost counted on the fingers of a single hand. In respect to its influences on human affairs in this world, creed was valued by the poet’s contemporaries as a power disposing people to be good for the sake of the future

rewards of goodness, and restraining people from evil through dread of the future punishment of wickedness;—one of their prime theories of human nature being that man was so strongly disposed to evil,—especially to the indulgence of the vindictive passions and sensual appetites,—as to be incapable of living righteously on being liberated from the terrors of orthodox theology. In escaping from orthodox creed the unbeliever escaped from the motives and considerations that withheld men *from* evil, and was bound sooner or later to surrender himself to his natural propensity *to* evil. When this opinion was so general as to be almost universal in English society, it followed from the evidence of his writings that the poet of free thought was a person, not only capable of flagrant immorality, but certain to distinguish himself sooner or later by sinful excesses.

In the Observations on the ‘Remarks on Don Juan,’ written in 1820, Byron urged that his fellow-countrymen can have had no sufficient grounds for the almost unanimous verdict which drove him from their presence, as they knew literally nothing of him and his affairs except that he was a nobleman who had written poetry, and after becoming a father had quarrelled with his wife and her relatives from causes that had not been revealed to the public. Speaking of the same verdict, Macaulay insists that the poet was the victim of something worse than Jedburgh justice in the proceedings, which opened with the execution and closed without an utterance of the articles of accusation. But in truth the public knew more of the culprit’s affairs than the poet cared to admit, and more of his misbehaviour than the essayist cared to allow. Besides knowing that he had written poetry, the judges had read the poems in which he had proclaimed himself a sceptic and a libertine. And though people were altogether in the dark as to the particulars of his misdeemeanour, the notorious and indisputable fact of Lady Byron’s refusal to live with him any longer placed him at the tribunal of social opinion under a general accusation of disloyalty and misbehaviour to a wife, whose irreproachable fame forbade the world to think it possible for her to have repudiated him for light and trivial offences. Under these circumstances it cannot be fairly alleged that the poet was condemned without indictment, or that his judges were altogether without grounds for declaring him guilty. The accusation was wanting in particularity; and the merciless sentence was wildly disproportionate to the culprit’s considerable offences; but the verdict was a just one. During a long distemper of selfishness and irritability and splenetic savagery he had treated his wife ill; though he was absolutely innocent of the more serious offences of conjugal dis-



loyalty, and absolutely incapable of the atrocious excesses of which many—indeed, the majority of his judges imagined him to have been guilty. However culpable he may have been to his conjugal partner every man, who consents to a private deed of separation from his wife on mere considerations of incompatibility of temper, is likely to suffer in reputation from the privacy of an arrangement, which by withholding the nature and particulars of the dissension from the world's knowledge may be almost said to invite the malicious and the idle to discover worse causes than the real ones for the severance. In credit and happiness Byron suffered heavily from such secrecy. Had it been the result of a suit and decree in the ecclesiastical court, the poet's separation from his wife would have been nothing worse than a transient inconvenience and momentary trouble, instead of being a perpetual poison to his nature, an enduring disfigurement to his fame, and an unwholesome mystery to the students of his story. Had he driven the Noels into Doctors' Commons, he would not have lived to exclaim in anguish, impotent for everything but the expression of its own intense bitterness,

‘Have I not suffered things to be forgiven?  
Have I not had my brain sear'd, my heart riv'n,  
Hopes sapp'd, name blighted, life's life lied away?

By defining his wife's grievances, putting precise limits to his own misbehaviour (for which he was to be compassionated rather than blamed), and telling all the evil that could be justly said of him, the investigation would have given him a security from the spite of lying tongues and the inventions of morbid fancy, that would have been cheaply purchased by the humiliations of the exposure and ridicule accruing to him from the one day's suit and nine days' scandal.

Resembling the majority of sudden storms in being heralded by sure signs of atmospheric disturbance, the storm, that swept the poet from the pedestal of national honour, exceeded all tempests of its kind known to biography in the copiousness of the calumny, the virulence of the denunciations and the diversity of the slanders it poured upon the object of universal detestation. It was not enough for his assailants to deride the man of fine sensibility for lacking the temper of men of gentle breeding, to ridicule the poet for failing in chivalric considerateness towards his young wife, to taunt the nobleman with having displayed the most offensive qualities of a churl and boor. Words of truth, however scornful and scalding, were too weak for the passion and frenzy of the hour. To give expression to the ferment and the sincere convictions of society it was necessary for journalists and



pamphleteers to charge him with crimes foreign to his nature, and vices to which he had no inclination. It was alleged that he had struck his wife, brought profligate women to her house, and fired off pistols in her bedroom in the hope of frightening her into premature labour and fatal child-birth. It was even whispered that he had offered her indignities too nauseous and revolting to be mentioned in a book written for general circulation. Whilst poetasters wrote doggerel about the unbeliever's 'guilty mind' and 'unhallowed eye,' notorious libertines spoke of his impurity with virtuous repugnance. 'I was accused,' the poet observed four years later without exaggeration, 'of every monstrous vice by public rumour and private rancour; my name, which had been a knightly or a noble one since my fathers helped to conquer the kingdom for William the Norman, was tainted. I felt that, if what was whispered and muttered and murmured was true, I was unfit for England; if false, England was unfit for me.' As though he were stricken with a loathsome disease, to be caught from the touch of his hand, the exhalation of his body, or the baneful light of his evil glance, the world fell away from the man of blasted fame, to whose door carriages used in former time to roll in such numbers as to block the way of St. James's Street. With the exception of letters from angry tradespeople, dunning lawyers, and anonymous slanderers, few epistles came now to the tables which no long while since were covered with cards of invitation from the Queens of Fashion.

Murmured and muttered against, if not loudly hooted, when he drove through the streets, or walked across a public pavement to his carriage, the man of fine sensibility and turbulent temper, whether he moved about the town or stayed within his own doors, saw and felt the infamy that had come upon him,—saw it in the stony coldness of averted faces, felt it in the silence of his solitary rooms. He still went to see Kean in his best characters; but the half-dozen of his oldest and truest friends, who still had the courage to cross his threshold, would fain have dissuaded him from visiting the theatre, where an actress of singular beauty and cleverness had been recently hissed from the stage, because she was suspected of intimacy with the poet, to whom she had never even spoken. He still dared to show himself and vote in the House of Lords, but he went thither at the risk of being insulted by the way, and with the knowledge that whilst the populace regarded him with furious disfavour the peers regarded him with contemptuous coldness. The mob never mobbed the poet, in the fashion of the mob through which Lord Cadurcis cuts his way in the pages of 'Venetia;' but Hobhouse and

Rogers had good grounds for their lively fear that a riotous crowd would give the poet a rough farewell, on his departure from London for Dover. The curious and angry people, who gathered about the poet's travelling-carriage whilst its roof was being loaded with his luggage, and scowling viciously at him breathed deep curses on all wicked lords and false husbands, as he took his seat in the vehicle when he had first regarded them with proud composure, were an assemblage that any untoward accident would have converted to a mob of rioters. Possibly the poet's aspect—something in the air of his delicate and lovely features, something in the tranquil beauty of his firm and fearless face, something in the grandeur of his brow, something in the sorrow and courage of his terribly luminous blue-grey eyes,—may have restrained them from premeditated violence, by inspiring them with doubt whether a man so young and fair to view could be so old in vice and hardened in crime. Anyhow they forbore to wreck his carriage, and let him go his way without provoking him to use his pistols.

It was the opinion of persons, familiar with Byron and shrewdly observant of the circles in which he was an idol for barely four years, that the outcry against him within those circles proceeded from the men who disliked him for his eccentricities, envied him for his success, resented his occasional superciliousness, detested him for his political extravagances, and loathed him for their own wild misconceptions of his immorality ;—and that the majority of the women only acquiesced from sheer terror in the verdict of their furious lords, which they dared not resist and could not have reversed. And it can be believed that not a few of the women who looked away from their former friend in public places, and drove past his carriage in the streets without bowing to him, were at heart on his side rather than on his wife's side. On the other hand it is certain that there were not a few women amongst the people of fashionable light and leading who, throwing themselves with passionate vehemence into the mad war against his honour and happiness, became his most malignant traducers even as they had formerly been his noisiest adulators. Exemplifying the truth of Congreve's lines,—

‘ Heaven has no rage like love to hatred turned,  
Nor hell a fury like a woman scorned ;’

the woman, who in the poet's hour of triumph had thrown herself at his feet, hunted him from house to house, forced herself into his presence in male attire, implored him to fly with her, thought no sacrifice of feminine dignity and delicacy too high a price to pay for his preference, was the woman who, on seeing the world turn against him, hastened to exult over his downfall

and to stimulate with monstrous calumny the passions which she had done so much to evoke for his destruction. To make him appear more shameful she was even capable of confessing much of her own shame, in the pages of the novel that, doing nothing for the accomplishment of the author's malignant object, wrought *her* reputation greater injury than the book was meant to inflict on *his* honour. Writing 'Glenarvon' with murderous purpose, Lady Caroline Lamb published it with suicidal result. Sufficiently clever and coherent to show that she was not mad, the book with only half its malignity and falsehood and shamelessness would have been sufficiently malicious, untruthful and shameless to prove her a bad as well as a foolish woman. It was her boast that it took her only a month to write the book which followed Byron to Geneva. Even if the boast were truthful, the fact would tell nothing of the time and labour expended on the performance by the hack who dressed it for the press. Like the author's other novels 'Glenarvon' was less the work of the frivolous woman of fashion, who was incapable of the labour of writing a flimsy romance without professional assistance, than of the person who *re-wrote* it and put it together for the printer. The parts, however, of the story for which Lady Caroline Lamb was personally accountable comprise the matters which would be most discreditable to her, had she written every line of the production which, whenever it was begun, was pushed through the press, to consummate the ruin of the man whom she had loved and adored,—and whom she professed to adore—and in a wild, crazy way, *did* adore—when death had released him from the troubles which she had done so much to create and aggravate.

Whilst Lady Caroline Lamb was correcting the proof sheets of 'Glenarvon' and ordering the superb cover for the copy of the novel which she meant to send to Byron, Lady Jersey was sending out her cards of invitation for the party, at which the poet took farewell of English society. If she resembled many women in sympathising with the poet, and wishing him well out of his troubles and well away from his persecutors, Lady Jersey was almost singular in having the courage to declare the friendly feeling. But though her generosity and daring were exemplary, it is questionable whether the Countess chose the best way of expressing her benevolent regard for the victim of social injustice when on the eve of his departure from England she invited him to an entertainment, given expressly in his honour. For though it was in the power of so momentous a personage to fill her drawing-rooms with people, ready to humour her generous whim and amuse themselves by taking a last look at the departing poet, she could not constrain them to treat him with reassuring



heartiness. After a lapse of years the guest of the evening could write with drollery of the various ways in which Lady Jersey's friends indicated their various degrees of coldness towards or compassion for him; but at the time it must have caused him more mortification than amusement to discover in hardened features and frigid words and looks of obvious embarrassment only too conclusive evidence that he was regarded as the black sheep and discredit of his order even by the persons who, being (as Moore expresses it) habitually 'tolerant of domestic irregularities,' were the persons of all England most likely to take a charitable and lenient view of his real misdemeanours and alleged offences. One can imagine what fun was made in the destroyed 'Memoirs' of the equally absurd and vexatious incidents of a scene, that would doubtless have been turned to good account in one of the concluding cantos of 'Don Juan,' had the poet lived to finish the great satire. Some of the matrons were severely ceremonious, whilst others were loftily forgiving. Ladies of the gushing sort plunged into amiable familiarity, and then fearful of committing themselves too far bridled their impetuosity and withdrew into coldness and reserve. Besides Lady Jersey with her smiles of summer sunshine, the only woman to delight the culprit with frank and fearless cordiality was Miss Mercer (afterwards Lady Keith), of whom he wrote gratefully in one of his diaries: 'She is a high-minded woman, and showed me more friendship than I deserved from her. I heard also of her having defended me in a large company, which *at that time* required more courage and firmness than most women possess.' The men were hard, frigid and suspicious. Some of them barely exchanged the civilities of the *salon* with the chief guest. Some of them slipt to another room, in order to avoid the necessity of greeting him. Speaking of the poet's disgrace and the acuteness of the pain it occasioned him, Harness says, 'He would have drawn himself up, and crossed his arms and curled his lip, and looked disdainfully on any amount of clamorous hostility; but he stole away from the ignominy of being silently cut.' Even in Lady Jersey's drawing-room, where no one could venture to show him open incivility, he was troubled by 'the altered countenances of his acquaintances' and endured the ignominy of being treated with magnanimity. A few days later he stole away from the land of his birth,—the land he never revisited.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

## SWITZERLAND.

Brussels—Waterloo—The Poets mode of Travelling—Other Tourists—  
 Hotel Sécheron—Villa Diodati—Polidori—Genevese Scandal-mongers  
 —Byron's Wrath against Southey—His Overture to Lady Byron—His  
 Rage at its Failure—His promise to Claire—Allegra's Birth and Death  
 —Claire's Scornful Words—Teresa Guiccioli—Bernese Oberland.

SAILING from Dover on the 25th April, 1816, Byron entered the harbour of Ostend on the night of the 26th, having suffered little from the sea during a passage which, though favourable, would in these days of quick steamers be thought tedious. Accompanied by three servants (William Fletcher and Robert Rushton, the yeoman and page of 'Childe Harold's' first canto, and a Swiss named Berger), he was also attended by Polidori—the vain and light-headed young doctor, of Italian name and parentage, who, after playing the part of a literary impostor with his impudent expansion of Byron's brief prose sketch, 'The Vampire,' closed a rather discreditable career by suicide; a form of death from which he had been saved in Switzerland by his patron's generosity, shortly before the poet dismissed from his service so embarrassing an associate.

Having provided himself with a capacious and luxurious coach (so constructed, on the model of Napoleon's travelling-carriage taken at Genappe, as to contain a bed, a library, a plate-chest and a dinner-service) and a caleche for his baggage and servants (the vehicle whose purchase involved the poet in a rather comical dispute with an extortionate Brussels coach-builder), Byron journeyed leisurely through Flanders and by the Rhine route to Switzerland,—a course through which he may be accompanied in the third canto of 'Childe Harold'; the poem of Waterloo, the Rhine and Lake Lemman. It was at Brussels after a visit to the famous field that the poet committed to paper (in Mrs. Pryce L. Gordon's album) the two first of the Waterloo stanzas, the second of them containing the lines,

'Here his last flight the haughty eagle flew,  
 Then tore, *with bloody beak*, the fatal plain;  
 Pierced with the shafts of banded nations through,  
 Ambition's life, and labours, all were vain—  
 He wears the shatter'd links of the world's broken chain;'

a description that was relieved a few weeks later of a serious blemish, on the suggestion of the clever artist (R. R. Reinagle), who, on consenting to illustrate the verses with a vignette,

remarked that the chained bird must be drawn, striking the earth with his talons. 'Reinagle,' the poet wrote in acknowledgment of the painter's criticism, 'is a better poet and ornithologist than I am : eagles, and all birds of prey, attack with their talons, and not with their beaks, and I have altered the line thus :—

"Then tore, with bloody talon, the rent plain."

This is, I think, a better line, besides its poetical justice.'

So discriminating and judicious a biographer as Karl Elze having expressed astonishment that Byron, only a few weeks since *vis-à-vis de rien*, should have been able to travel so expensively, it is well to remind the reader of this page that the poet's most urgent pecuniary embarrassments were less due to insufficiency of means for current expenses, than to the absence of money for the payment of long-growing debts ;—that, notwithstanding the magnitude of his incumbrances, the owner of Newstead and Rochdale could still have borrowed ten thousand pounds of the most cautious money-lenders ;—that he still had friends (like Kinnaird the banker, Rogers the banker, and Murray the publisher) able and ready to minister to his financial necessities ;—and that the writer (the demand for whose writings had been stimulated instead of checked by the scandal of his domestic trouble) was well aware that his genius would afford him a revenue exceeding both his necessities and desires, as soon as he should get the better of a foolish scruple of false pride, and condescend to write for money. The poet who received 1050*l.* for 'Parisina' and the 'Siege of Corinth,' who sold the third canto of 'Childe Harold' at a rate of more than 28*s.* a line, and who got for the fourth and much the longest canto of the same poem something more than 25*s.* a line, could have afforded to indulge in the pomp of three servants, the comfort of a luxurious coach, and the services of a travelling physician, even if he had been altogether dependent on his brain and pen.

In the previous February, when duns were at his door and bailiffs in his house, Byron had proposed distributing between three necessitous men of letters the thousand guineas, which Mr. Murray had recently pressed upon him in payment for 'Parisina' and 'The Siege of Corinth.' And had it not been for the publisher's reluctance to act in accordance with his client's munificent design, 600*l.* of 1050*l.* would have been given to Mr. Godwin, to whom the poet may have been disposed thus generously by regard for the philosopher's step-daughter as well as by respect for his services and concern for his distress. As Coleridge and Maturin were to have divided the remaining 450*l.*, after Godwin had been relieved with the much larger sum, the



arrangement indicates a preference, for which Claire may be conceived to have been accountable; and whilst the excellence of Byron's motives in the affair is not affected unfavourably by the suggestion that he was just then looking out for an opportunity of doing Jane Clermont's people a substantial service, one would like to believe that Jane (whose reputation needs whatever good can be spoken of it) was not slow to use her influence with the poet for her mother's advantage, though she was far too proud and high-hearted a girl to have thought for an instant of exerting it for her own selfish benefit.

Whilst Byron's huge coach was rolling along the banks of the Rhine, another party of English travellers journeyed less luxuriously and leisurely to Switzerland by the less picturesque route. This second party consisted of another poet, two young women (neither of whom was nineteen years old) and an infant. They were Shelley (younger by four years than Byron, who was still only twenty-eight years of age); Mary Godwin, who had for some time been living in the closest of affectionate relations to Shelley, though she was not his legal wife; her sister-by-affinity, Jane Clermont *alias* Claire, the girl of bright eyes, olive complexion, Italian features and southern fervour; and Mary's infant son William, her first child by the poet whose name she had taken together with his heart. There was one strange point of resemblance in the two parties, that by different ways and in different modes were moving to the same Swiss hotel. Each of the poets had left a wife in England, from whom he had been separated by inauspicious circumstances. But the fortunes of the two wives had no similitude. Whilst Lady Byron had retired to her parent's stately home, the woman of untarnished honour who lived to be a peeress in her own right; Mrs. Shelley was dropping through shame and guilt to the despair, in which her melancholy story closed by her own act.

It has been the practice of Shelley's biographers to deal with the meeting of these two parties at the Hotel Sécheron, just outside Geneva, as an unpremeditated occurrence; and though he has sought it with some pains the writer of these pages has sought in vain for *positive* testimony<sup>1</sup> that both parties started

<sup>1</sup> Since this paragraph was written, the positive testimony for which I sought in vain has, with Sir Percy Florence Shelley's sanction, been given to the world by Mr. J. Anthony Froude, in his article on 'The Real Lord Byron' in the 'Nineteenth Century' of August 1883. Mr. Froude admits that I was right in holding, that the meeting of the two parties at the Hotel Sécheron was the result of pre-arrangement. But Mr. Froude insists the pre-arrangement was the affair of only Byron and Claire, and was withheld from Shelley and Mary Godwin by their travelling companion. Yet further, Mr. Froude insists that Shelley did not take Mary

from England with the purpose of uniting in Switzerland. The circumstantial evidence, however, is overwhelming that the

Godwin and Claire to Switzerland, but that it was Claire who took him and her sister to Geneva. Mr. Froude says, that when they accompanied her to Switzerland, without knowing or suspecting *why* she wished to go there, Shelley and Mary Godwin disliked Claire cordially—disliking her for being a malicious, spiteful, and altogether intolerable girl; regarding her disgustfully on account of her unclean notions respecting the intercourse of the sexes. Touring in pre-railway times with an odious companion was even more vexatious than touring under such circumstances now-a-days. Yet Mr. Froude insists that Shelley and Mary Godwin associated themselves for several months of foreign touring, with a girl they disliked extremely, for the pure pleasure of her society. Mr. Froude wishes us to believe that almost to the last day of their stay with Claire in Switzerland, neither Shelley nor Mary Godwin had the faintest suspicion that Claire was Byron's mistress; and that though Byron was at pains to have his mistress brought out to him, under cover of her travelling companions, he never saw her at Geneva, except in the presence of some witness to the propriety of their demeanour to one another. Admitting that Byron talked to Claire on the most delicate subjects—such as her pregnancy, arrangements for her accouchement, plans for the disposal of her child when it should be born—Mr. Froude says that throughout her stay in Switzerland, she could not easily have been alone with Byron even for the shortest interview. On what grounds does Mr. Froude ask us to believe things so incredible that it is difficult to imagine the evidence that would justify us in believing them? Apart from evidence that Claire and Mary Godwin had a few transient tiffs in 1815, Mr. Froude has nothing whatever *to show*; nothing whatever to urge except talk about a letter, which he may not show, because Sir Percy Shelley thinks it would be imprudent to show it, whilst producing divers other letters. We are not told when this letter was written, to whom it was written, under what circumstances it was written, for what purpose it was written. Mr. Froude says the letter was written by Claire. How does he know she wrote it? Mr. Froude thinks far worse of poor Claire than I do. Mr. Froude believes her to have been a very faulty woman, and so grossly indelicate that her way of talking about the sexes 'scandalised even Shelley' and Mary Godwin,—who, all the same, liked her well enough to live with her for years afterwards in the closest intimacy; and even after the birth of her illegitimate child (Allegra), to call her their 'sister' in society, and to style her their 'sister' in their charming 'History of a Six Weeks' Tour.' Mr. Froude believes half-a-hundred evil things of Claire; and yet a letter, said to have been written by her (a letter he does not venture to submit to public scrutiny) is enough to satisfy him that Byron, after causing her (his mistress) to come out to him in Switzerland, never saw her there except in the presence of a third party. To believe this of Byron is certainly to have a marvellous power of believing the incredible. When it shall be produced to the world, it will be time enough to give an opinion whether this marvellous letter was written by Claire to screen her sister Mary from her father's censure, or at a later time to whitewash her sister Mary in the eyes of Sussex society, or was a fabrication, for which Claire was in no degree accountable. Should it appear that Claire really wrote the letter, it will only be evidence of her faculty for fibbing. A cynic may well smile to think that the gentleman, who wrote so wildly in 'The Nineteenth Century' of Byron's innocent intercourse with his mistress, is an authoritative writer of English History for the multitude.



meeting was no mere accident. Still the evidence is only circumstantial; and some uncertainty attends all conclusions from the inferential testimony of circumstances. In reference to Byron's previous knowledge of Claire and his reunion with her by the bright waters of Leman, Mr. William Michael Rossetti (a biographer no less conscientious than acute and careful) observes in his 'Memoir of Shelley,' 'Byron possibly—indeed, probably—had then admired her: if not then, he did so now. The result was the birth, in the following January, of the daughter known to Byronic biographers as Allegra or Alba. Shelley and Mary knew nothing of this fleeting outburst of passion at the time, and were by no means pleased when its results became apparent. But they acted with perfect good feeling, and did everything for Allegra and her mother.' Shelley and Mary may well have been troubled by the appearance of its results, may even have been surprised by consequences, following so quickly on their cause, but it is beyond belief they were so ignorant of this fleeting outburst of passion at the time. It being certain that the fleeting passion had its birth and first triumph in London it is inconceivable that it was withheld by Claire from Mary. The only motives a girl in Claire's position could have for holding her passion from the knowledge of her sister would be motives of shame and delicacy. Such motives cannot be supposed to have influenced Jane Clermont in her intercourse with her sister-by-affinity,—the wife of a man to whom she was not married, the mother of a child who in the law's eye from one point of view was no one's child. Claire saw no sin in her passion for Byron, no reason why she should blush to avow it. Five years later when in the bitterness of her displeasure at his plan for her child's education, she exclaimed to Byron, 'I alone, misled by love to believe you good, trusted to you and now reap the fruits,' Claire only rendered bare justice to the feelings which gave her to his power. Believing him good she loved him; loving him because she believed him good and found him unutterably delightful and dear to her, she consented to what was his desire and her own gladness. What was there in such an affair to rouse shame in the eighteen-years-old Claire, who had been taught to believe that the love which yearned for marriage was the only sanction its marriage needed? Prudence might have determined her to be silent to the world about so innocent a passion, but would not have required her to be silent to her closest female friend, her sister, who was already loving Shelley and living with him, precisely as she herself was loving and hoping to live with Byron. Certainly on all other matters, there was the fullest confidence between these



young girls of the same home. Their mutual affection glowed with the impetuosity of girlish romance. Mary had in every turn and trial of her love for the one poet enjoyed Claire's sympathy, approval and encouragement. Is it to be imagined that the impulsive Claire was less frank about her passion for the other poet? or that Mary—to whom the affair must have been peculiarly acceptable, from its close resemblance to her own affair of the heart—was less liberal of approving words and cordial wishes? Is it conceivable that on this subject alone—the topic which must have made Claire bubble over with sisterly communicativeness—there was a reserve in the mutual confidence, that was otherwise so perfect?

Whilst it is impossible to believe that Mary was excluded from Claire's confidence on this most interesting and absorbing subject, it is difficult to imagine it a matter on which Mary gave no confidence at all or only a half-confidence to her own poet. Why should she have withheld from him anything of a matter that would appear to him alike innocent, reasonable, and advantageous both to Claire and Byron;—an arrangement that would afford him the agreeable feeling that his own way of dealing with the gentler sex, having been already imitated by the most popular poet of his generation, would soon be imitated by other persons of supreme sensibility and enlightenment? The thing he approved for himself was no thing for Shelley to disapprove in Byron's case. The course, which was virtuous for Mary, could not strike him as vicious for Mary's sister. True that he and Byron were widely different men,—that whilst he was comparatively calm and steadfast of purpose, Byron was superlatively passionate and volatile, almost on principle. But as he never saw Byron till they met at Geneva, Shelley may well have been altogether unaware, was certainly by no means fully aware of this difference, whilst the two parties were journeying to their place of meeting. True, also, that Mary and Claire (sisters only by affinity) differed greatly in temper, judgment, feeling, as well as in personal appearance. But the difference may have escaped the poetic dreamer and gentle mystic who lived more in the clouds than on the earth's surface. Moreover systems (and the younger poet's view of marriage was part of a system of morals commended for acceptance to universal human nature) may not be nicely considerate for the peculiarities of individuals. Certainly no injustice is done to Shelley by the suggestion that he went to Geneva with a clear knowledge of Claire's passion for Byron and of her expectation of meeting him there, or by the statement that on his road to Geneva (in his ignorance of certain of Byron's infirmities,—at least, his ignorance of them

from personal observation) he would have seen nothing to disapprove in an arrangement for Claire to live with her admirer,<sup>1</sup> even as he was himself living with her sister-by-affinity.

In connection with these reasons for thinking it probable that Shelley started for Switzerland with a knowledge of Claire's passion for Byron, and even carried her to Geneva for the express purpose of restoring her to his society, it may be remarked that—instead of setting out for the Swiss capital without alleging a reason for the journey, or with a bare announcement to his friends that he was going thither because it was his pleasure to do so—the author of 'Queen Mab' covered his departure with a false pretext. The evidence is conclusive that the poet's alleged reason for going abroad in the beginning of May and all the various statements touching the pretext were purely fictitious. His pretext for a course of action, for which he was under no obligation to give any reason whatever, was that he desired to escape from the reach of his father and one of his uncles, who were conspiring to seize his person and put him in confinement. He even alleged that he had received warning of this conspiracy from Mr. Williams, the

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Froude thinks this statement an insult to Shelley. My answer is that Mr. Froude insults Shelley by thinking him insulted by the words. It was Shelley's opinion—opinion of slow growth even from his boyhood—that marriage was a demoralizing institution, that it was immoral for a man and woman to promise to love one another for ever, that if they made it to one another the promise was not binding on either of them, that Marriage ought to be abolished and replaced by Free Love, *i. e.* by cohabitation so arranged that either party to the affectionate league would be free to retire from the association at will. In 1813 he wrote, 'How long then ought the sexual connection to last? What law ought to specify the extent of the grievance which should limit its duration? A husband and wife ought to continue so long united as they love each other; any law which should bind them to cohabitation for one moment after the decay of their affection, would be a most intolerable tyranny. . . . But if happiness be the object of morality, of all human unions and disunions; if the worthiness of every action is to be estimated by the quantity of pleasurable sensation it is calculated to produce, then the connection of the sexes is so long sacred as it contributes to the comfort of the parties, and is naturally dissolved when its evils are greater than its benefits. There is nothing immoral in this separation. Constancy has nothing virtuous in itself, independently of the pleasure it confers, and partakes of the temporizing spirit of vice in proportion as it endures tamely moral defects of magnitude in the object of its indiscreet choice. Love is Free; to promise for ever to love the same woman, is not less absurd than to promise to believe the same creed; such a vow, in both cases, excludes us from all inquiry.'—*Vide* 'Notes to Queen Mab.'—Holding these views in 1813 Shelley acted upon them in 1814; and the evidence is overwhelming that he held these views long after he went to Geneva with Claire and met Byron there. Do I insult Shelley by assuming that Shelley sincerely believed what he taught, and that his acts accorded with his sincere opinions?



agent of Mr. Madocks of Tanyrallt. The whole story was an invention. There was no such conspiracy. Mr. Williams never told the poet to beware of such a plot. How are we to account for so astounding a fiction? Mr. Rossetti is of opinion that the poet's apparent falsehood was due to overwrought fancy. 'We must remember,' says the admirable biographer, 'that a poet is "of imagination all compact;" and, as no one has better right than Shelley to the name of a poet, none consequently had a readier store of imaginations which he propounded as realities.' After all that has been written of the tricks played him by his imagination, it still remains to be proved that Shelley suffered in so unusual a way from the force of his fancy. In April and May, when Byron's movements were the subject of much curiosity and gossip, and other persons besides Mrs. Clermont (the mischief-maker) were no less curious about Jane Clermont's (Claire's) movements, Shelley—at the moment of preparing to take the girl to Geneva, where *she* at least hoped to meet Byron—may well have been desirous of baffling the spies and tattlers, eager for evidence that Claire was going after her admirer. Under such circumstances, Shelley would be tempted to hoist a false flag, and might feel himself justified in shielding his ladies with an untruth, that could not do harm to anyone. Even if the fiction was believed by its utterer, the delusion may have been the result of the poet's strong and natural desire for secrecy, acting on his quick and powerful fancy.

Byron was preceded to Switzerland by the sinister reports that attended him henceforth almost to the grave;—the invisible and blighting angel of defamation that, hovering over every house in which he dwelt in Switzerland and Italy, caused it to be regarded with curiosity and repugnance as the abode of a mysteriously wicked man, no less splendid by mental endowments than hateful for crime, whose sensibility was tainted with vile desire, and whose divine faculty of song gave pernicious beauty to poisonous thought.

There was commotion in the Sécheron hotel when the poet's carriages drew up at its entrance; and before he had been there an hour, his name had been uttered in every corridor and chamber of the house. Shelley's party had engaged the attention of the inmates of the hotel for eight days before the appearance of Byron and Polidori. The interest taken in each of the two parties was heightened by the closeness of their association and intimacy. It was whispered amongst the idlers that Mary was no ceremoniously wedded wife, that Claire was her sister in the fullest sense of the term, that Byron had found in the bright brunette an agreeable substitute for his unforgiving wife. It is



needless to say that the people and visitors of the hotel were at no pains to conceal their curiosity, and for its gratification did not shrink from outrages of intrusiveness. When the poets and the ladies went for a drive, they could not get to their carriage without passing through a crowd of starers. They were attended by the same throng of whispering gazers to the water's marge, when they took boat for their evening's enjoyment of the lake. On landing by twilight or moonlight they were again under intrusive inspection. To escape from this source of continual annoyance, the two parties moved from the hotel to villas on the Mont Blanc side of the lake,—Byron and Polidori to the Villa Belle Rive, Shelley and the ladies to a small house only a ten minutes' walk distant. The result of the migration was, however, less than satisfactory; for in the gardens of the villa and cottage and on the way between the two habitations, the objects of interest could still be watched from a distance through telescopes; and in order that his guests might not be altogether deprived of an amusement which had for more than a fortnight redounded to his advantage, the obliging host of the Hotel Sécheron was at pains and charges to provide them with telescopes of sufficient power. For greater privacy the victims of curiosity and scandalous gossip moved again—Byron into the Villa Diodati, Shelley with the wearers of petticoats into the little house at its foot, the Maison Chapuis or Campagne Mont Alègre, to which Allegra (born in the first month of the ensuing year) was indebted for her name. Screened by the umbrage of their grounds, the tenants of these pleasant dwellings could be no longer watched by the possessors of telescopes. It was, however, still possible for the curious idlers to talk freely of the persons withdrawn from their view, and imagine the scenes they were not permitted to survey. Of the license of these gossip-mongers it is enough to say that on coming to Geneva in September, immediately after the departure of Shelley for England, Hobhouse learnt that local rumour charged his friend with living on terms of scandalous familiarity with both and each of the two ladies, who had been recently residing in the house of a neighbouring gentleman immediately under the Château Diodati. If, therefore, he made the offensive statement, which caused Byron, in the 'Observations' (March 15, 1820) on the 'Blackwood article' on 'Don Juan,' to denounce him furiously for trying to blast the character of the daughter of the woman (Mary Wollstonecraft) whom he had formerly loved, Southey only repeated in England the story that came to Hobhouse's ears in September 1816;—the story which in the last-named month was generally told and believed in Geneva,

alike by the tourists of the hotels, and the habitual residents of the capital; the story which Hobhouse, on his return to England, repeated to his friends as an example of the egregious slanders circulated in the Swiss capital about his friend, at a time when he was living with temperance and industry.

‘When I left England in April 1816,’ Byron wrote in 1820, ‘ill in mind, in body, and in circumstances, I took up my residence at Coligny, by the Lake of Geneva. The sole companion of my journey was a young physician, who had to make his way in the world, and having seen very little of it, was naturally and laudably desirous of seeing more society than suited my present or my past experience. I therefore presented him to those gentlemen of Geneva for whom I had letters of introduction; and having thus seen him in a situation to make his own way, retired for my own part entirely from society, with the exception of one English family, living at about a quarter of a mile’s distance from Diodati, and with the further exception of some occasional intercourse with Coppet at the wish of Madame de Stäel. The English family to which I allude consisted of two ladies, a gentleman and his son, a boy of a year old. One (*i. e.* Southey) “of ‘these lofty-minded and virtuous men,’ in the words of the ‘Edinburgh Magazine’” (*i. e.* Blackwood’s) “made, I understand, about this time, or soon after, a tour in Switzerland. On his return to England, he circulated—and, for anything I know, invented—a report, that the gentleman to whom I have alluded and myself were living in promiscuous intercourse with two sisters, “having formed a league of incest” (I quote the words as they were repeated to me), and indulged himself on the natural comments on such a conjunction, which are said to have been repeated publicly, with great complacency, by *another* of that poetical fraternity’ (*i. e.* “the Lakers”), ‘of whom I shall say only, that even had the story been true, *he* should not have repeated it, as far as it regarded myself, except in sorrow. The tale itself requires but a word in answer,—the ladies were *not* sisters, nor in any degree connected, except by the second marriage of their respective parents, a widow with a widow, both being the offspring of former marriages; neither of them *were*’ (*sic*), ‘in 1816, nineteen years old. “Promiscuous intercourse” could hardly have disgusted the great patron of pantisocracy (does Mr. Southey remember such a scheme?), but there was none. . . . He’ (*i. e.* Southey) ‘has written “Wat Tyler,” and taken the office of poet-laureate,—he has, in the “Life of Henry Kirke White,” denominated reviewing “the ungentle craft” and become a reviewer—he was one of the projectors of a scheme, called “pantisocracy,” for having all things, including



women, in common (*query*, common women?), and he sets up as a moralist—he denounced the battle of Blenheim and praised the battle of Waterloo—he loved Mary Wollstonecraft, and he tried to blast the character of her daughter (one of the females mentioned).’

In this review of some of the circumstances of his journey to and sojourn in Switzerland, readers have an example of the insincerity and disingenuousness with which Byron used to write and speak about his private affairs. The prominence given to the sex of the sole companion of his journey was not innocent of a delusive purpose. By calling attention to his having made the journey without a female companion he guarded against the suspicion of journeying to the Hotel Sécheron to meet one. The suggestion that Southey may have invented a piece of the common talk of the Genevese coteries during his stay amongst them was a deliberate and malicious *suggestio falsi*. Though the full statement of the relation in which the ladies stood to one another was accurate, the introductory denial of their sisterhood was inaccurate. Byron was curiously persistent in this denial of a rumour that troubled him greatly. In a letter, written at Venice in May, 1819, about Polidori’s vamped-up ‘Vampire,’ he avers ‘The ladies are not sisters.’ He must have known that girls, connected by parental marriage in the manner accurately set forth, were sisters-by-affinity: and had the rumour of their intercourse with him been truthful, the intercourse, in the judgment of the Catholic Church (which in 1820 the poet regarded as the best as well as the most ancient of the great Christian Churches), would have been none the less incestuous because, instead of being sisters-by-blood, they were only sisters-by-affinity. When he represented that he went into Genevese society only for Polidori’s sake, the poet was less than truthful. It cannot have passed in 1820 from his memory, so retentive of annoying incidents, that on coming to Geneva with numerous letters of introduction he had every disposition to go into society for his own pleasure, and that he did not prefer a life of retirement from the coteries of a capital, which retained much of its ancient narrowness and austerity in matters of religion and morality, until he discovered how unfavourably he was regarded in those coteries. Even at Coppet he was made to feel it would be imprudent for him to go just then into the society of the *salons*. Everyone remembers how his Satanic presence amongst Madame de Stäel’s guests made Mrs. Hervey (the novelist), a gentlewoman of many years (65) and let it be hoped of as many virtues scream with terror and faint away. When nervous



ladies swooned or went into hysterics at the bare sight of so wicked a young man in a *salon*, not especially famous for orthodoxy and severity of manners, Byron received other and more serious intimations that Geneva felt for him in July precisely as London had felt for him in April. His statement that he went into the society of the Swiss capital out of paternal benevolence to his young doctor, and left it out of pure preference of seclusion was hypocritical affectation,—‘Bam’ qualified with pure falsehood; the simple truth of the matter being that he was in no mood for society, because society was in no mood for him.

The nature of Byron’s show of indignation and disgust (March 1820) at Southey’s monstrous calumny is revealed by the fact, that just twelve months later (March 1821), he could imagine Shelley capable of the offence pointed to in the slander, and could remind Hoppner lightly of their knowledge of Shelley’s vicious intimacy with his wife’s sister-by-affinity. When Byron thought in this fashion of Shelley, he had long been at enmity with Claire, who in March 1821 protested angrily and with an imprudent use of her power of sarcasm against his action in putting her child, Allegra, into a conventual school, and against his determination to have her educated in the Catholic faith. At this time Byron and Hoppner believed that Claire had become the mother of another child, whom she had put into some Italian Foundling Hospital for nurture during its infancy. Hoppner, who as the Britannic Consul-General at Venice may have had better evidence than servants’ tattle respecting the matter, was certain that Claire had given birth to a second child, and provided in that manner for its sustenance. The Consul-General’s information [which may have been false in *every* particular] was imparted to Byron, and they were both under the impression Shelley was the infant’s father.<sup>1</sup> On this last point they were certainly mistaken. Shelley was no man to live in adultery with his wife’s sister-by-affinity, or to follow Rousseau’s example in avoiding his parental responsibilities. Byron, however, believed his friend and fellow-poet capable of both offences;—possibly on no better grounds than the malicious tattle of servants and the fact that Claire, when not following her vocation of an English governess in Italy at a distance from the Shelleys, used to spend most of her time with them. Hence it was that Byron, in his anger at her disapproval

<sup>1</sup> As my statements respecting the Foundling Hospital have been misapprehended and misrepresented by Mr. Anthony Froude, I leave this sentence precisely as it stands in the first edition of ‘The Real Lord Byron.’ The recently-published denials [by Shelley and Mrs. Shelley] of the odious accusations justify my suggestion that the whole story was possibly ‘false in every particular.’—*Vide* Note at the end of this Chapter.

of his plan for little Allegra's education, thought of Claire (in March 1821) as a woman who, in her want of natural affection, had planted her child in a Foundling. This was the monstrous story, which came for the first time to Shelley's knowledge in August 1821, when he was staying with Byron at Ravenna. Well might Shelley, after clearing himself of the hideous imputation to Byron and enjoining Byron to disabuse Mr. and Mrs. Hoppner of their odious fancy, write to his wife, 'Imagine my despair of good, imagine how is it possible that one of so weak and sensitive a nature as mine can run further the gauntlet through this hellish society of men.' How long Byron had thought thus ill of his friend does not appear. The misconception does not seem to have been of very recent growth in March 1821. On the contrary, the matter had been an affair of interest to him and Hoppner for some time. It is neither impossible nor improbable that Byron thought thus ill of Shelley, and thought it without feeling less amiably towards him, at the very moment of his outpouring of disgustful wrath at Southey's slanderous speech. Anyhow the man who thought so lightly of Shelley's imaginary relation to Claire in March 1821, was scarcely the right man to express so much virtuous abhorrence at Southey's slander in the March of the previous year.

Notwithstanding the annoyances coming to him from the curiosity of English tourists and Genevese tattlers, the chagrin he must have felt at circumstances which compelled him to retirement, and the rage into which he was thrown by the failure of his overture to Lady Byron, the poet enjoyed his time on the shores and waters of Lake Lemán. With his vanity and captiousness, his outbreaks of conceit and pique, Polidori soon became a serious embarrassment and source of discord to the otherwise harmonious party. But for awhile, by force of the very peculiarities of his intellect and temper, which in a few weeks occasioned his dismissal, the light-headed young doctor was a cause of diversion rather than disagreement. The poets and their poetical ladies sailed the lake, by day and night, by moonlight even to dawn, in storm as well as in sunshine. Byron wrote much (the third canto of 'Childe Harold' was finished by the end of July, the 'Prisoner of Chillon' having been thrown off in two wet days of the previous month); Shelley by turns meditated deeply and read severely; in the hot days there were the leafy gardens for the sisters who had their books of fiction and literary enterprises for the beguilement of the hours, when their men had neither eyes for their beauty, nor ears for their sprightly talk. At night, when it was too dark or stormy for sailing on the lake, the four friends spent hours together in con-



versation alternately wise and brilliant,—sometimes, brilliant and wise at the same moment. The season was unpropitious from excessive rainfall; but the young people (especially the clever girls) had light hearts, and there were once and again some superbly fine days, in which all nature assuming her brightest beauty was eloquent of gladness.

When the rain had kept them prisoners to the house for several days, the tenants of the Villa Diodati, in the excitement of reading German ghost stories, agreed to compose tales that should surpass the works of the German authors in mystery and terror. 'You and I will publish ours together, Mrs. Shelley!' cried Byron, who produced the sketch which afforded Polidori an opportunity to show his natural genius for imposture. Byron's 'Vampire' was nothing but a hint for a terrifying narrative. Mrs. Shelley's wild and entrancing romance of 'Frankenstein' was, perhaps, the most vigorous and enthralling work of prose fiction ever written by so young a woman—a girl in her nineteenth year. Another memorable passage of this summer with the poets covered the days which Byron and Shelley, leaving their womankind to their own devices, spent in the tour of the lake,—the tour described by the younger of the two poets in a letter known to all students of his story. The sympathy of the two companions was sustained by the admiration each felt for the powers of the other. Exploring Rousseau's peculiar country with 'Heloise' in their hands, they were for a few days the happiest mortals of the whole universe. Children of sorrow, they forgot their troubles for a brief moment, and overflowing with boyish enthusiasm lived in the purest delights of genius.

This trip was followed after a brief interval by the overtures for reconciliation, which Byron is said to have made to his wife in submission to Madame de Stäel's judgment and sympathetic influence. Probably the lady was less accountable for the futile proposal than she imagined and successive writers have asserted. In spite of the animosities that had resulted in his wife's desire for the separation, the animosities to which the quarrel had given rise, the resentment which the publication of 'The Farewell' necessarily generated in the woman of imperfect temper, and the deeper wound he knew he had inflicted at the very moment of his departure, Byron had not left England without hope of a speedy recall. It has been the fashion to speak of Byron's withdrawal to foreign lands as exile and banishment for life, and the writer of these pages has acquiesced in the fashion; but readers may not infer that the poet took ship with a feeling that his absence from England would be perpetual or even of



considerable duration. The sincerest, almost the only sincere, words of 'The Farewell' are those of the lines,—

'Yet, oh yet, thyself deceive not  
Love may sink by slow decay,  
But by sudden wrench, believe not  
Hearts can thus be torn away.'

In his egotism he believed that Lady Byron would suffer in the same way as he suffered from the severance. In his vanity he imagined (and perhaps rightly) that she would suffer much more acutely than he would suffer from the violent rupture. There was little genuineness in his repeated declarations, that having done all in his power to persuade Lady Byron to return, and with this view put off as long as he could signing the deed of separation, that step being once taken, they were now divided for ever. Knowing that he had never, as the phrase goes, violated her marriage-bed, or at least had never committed any such act of conjugal infidelity to her knowledge, and believing that this extreme insult was the only crime a woman would find it difficult to pardon in so superlative a being as himself, he left England with a secret confidence that she would relent, and relenting would beckon him to her. His notion was that she would yield on easy terms, if not at discretion, within a few months, if he left her to herself, and in the mean time did nothing further to exasperate her. On growing weary of Claire in the early autumn, he would receive the message of reconciliation. In accordance with this favourable forecast, he was careful that his measures for enjoying Jane Clermont's society in Switzerland should offer his wife no open and flagrant affront. He was at pains that they might escape her knowledge and even her suspicion. By travelling ostentatiously without a female companion, he hoped to make Lady Byron imagine that the liaison with Claire was at an end. The circumstances of Claire's trip over the English Channel would preclude suspicion that he and she were bound for the same remote capital. At Geneva his association with Claire would be so speciously veiled by the presence of her friends, the Shelleys, and by her residence under their roof, that no one would suspect the hidden fact. Geneva was far away from London in pre-railway times; and all Lady Byron would hear of his doings in the remote and obscure little capital, would be that he was living quietly and decorously in its best circles, with Madame de Stäel for his mistress-in-chief. Of Shelley (unknown to fashion) the poet hoped his wife would hear nothing.

It has been told how egregiously events falsified Byron's

calculations and disappointed his hopes. The best circles of Geneva were closed to him; the best people of Geneva avoided him. The place was unusually full of English, many of whom had come there for the sport of watching him and sending to England unfavourable accounts of his doings. Instead of escaping attention, his intimacy with Claire was reported with hideous exaggerations. Far, far worse things were told of him at Kirkby Mallory than that he was living with Jane Clermont in the same picturesque abode. No wonder the overture to Lady Byron was fruitless of reconciliation. No wonder that *the* letter of peace to the particular friend in England, coming from Claire's admirer and Shelley's 'familiar,' appeared to Lady Byron a shameless and heinous aggravation of all its writer's previous offences. No wonder that Byron received an answer that made him rue his folly in provoking it. The humiliation of the rebuff was the more keen and bitter because it could not be concealed from Madame de Stäel, and would therefore be known to the whole world. The insult offered to him at Coppet was a slap that would reverberate in every *salon* of Paris. The man of fine sensibility and hot temper was furious. His first act of vengeance was 'The Dream,' a lovely and elaborate falsehood, written to persuade all mankind that he had never loved the woman, whose heart he was yearning to recover. Then in a still more malignant mood he composed for her torture of heart and brain the awful, the diabolically cruel 'Incantation,' subsequently inserted into 'Manfred,'—

'Though thy slumber may be deep,  
Yet thy spirit shall not sleep;

\* \* \* \* \*

Though thou see'st me not pass by,  
Thou shalt feel me with thine eye  
As a thing that, though unseen,  
Must be near thee, and hath been;  
And when in that secret dread  
Thou hast turn'd around thy head,  
Thou shalt marvel I am not  
As thy shadow on the spot,  
And the power which thou dost feel  
Shall be what thou must conceal.'

With unabated vindictiveness he went to work at the 'Marriage of Belphegor,' the prose romance in which he meant to turn the whole universe against one woman—a faulty woman, doubtless, but a very miserable one, who but for him would have been less faulty and far less miserable, possibly even a happy woman, and the good woman she certainly tried to be, with imperfect success. In wilder and more malicious frenzy, on hearing she was ill, as though her illness was at the same

time a matter for his exultation, a proof of her wickedness, and an intolerable addition to the injuries she had done him, this inspired maniac railed at her in the following style (the verses being, however, withheld from publication during the author's life)—

'I am too well avenged!—but 'twas my right;  
 Whate'er my sins might be, thou wert not sent  
 To be the Nemesis who should requite—  
 Nor did Heaven choose so near an instrument.  
 Mercy is for the merciful!—if thou  
 Hast been of such, 'twill be accorded now.  
 Thy nights are banish'd from the realms of sleep!—  
 Yes! they may flatter thee, but thou shalt feel  
 A hollow agony which will not heal,  
 For thou art pillow'd on a curse too deep;  
 Thou hast sown in my sorrow, and must reap  
 The bitter harvest in a woe as real!  
 I have had many foes, but none like thee;  
 For 'gainst the rest myself I could defend,  
 And be avenged, or turn them into friend!  
 But thou in safe implacability  
 Hadst nought to dread—in thy own weakness shielded,  
 And in my love, which hath but too much yielded,  
 And spared, for thy sake, some I should not spare;  
 And thus upon the world—trust in thy truth,  
 And the wild fame of my ungovern'd youth—  
 On things that were not, and on things that are—  
 Even upon such a basis thou hast built  
 A monument, whose cement is guilt!  
 The moral Clytemnestra of thy lord,  
 And hew'd down, with an unsuspected sword,  
 Fame, peace, and hope—and all the better life  
 Which, but for this cold treason of thy heart,  
 Might still have risen from out the grave of strife,  
 And found a nobler duty than to part.  
 And of thy very virtues didst thou make a vice,  
 Trafficking with them in a purpose cold,  
 For present anger, and for future gold—  
 And buying others' grief at any price.  
 And thus once enter'd into crooked ways,  
 The early truth, which was thy proper praise,  
 Did not still walk beside thee—but at times,  
 And with a breast unknowing its own crimes,  
 Deceit, averments incompatible,  
 Equivocations, and the thoughts which dwell  
 In Janus-spirits—the significant eye  
 Which learns to lie with silence—the pretext  
 Of prudence, with advantages annex'd—  
 The acquiescence in all things which tend,  
 No matter how, to the desired end—  
 All found a place in thy philosophy.  
 The means were worthy, and the end is won—  
 I would not do by thee as thou hast done.'

September 1816.

And what, the reader may well ask, had the lady done to pro-



voke this outpouring of disdainful wrath? Two months since she was so much the object of the poet's admiration and confidence, that his strong wish and prayer were that she would recall him to her presence and closest companionship. And now she has changed to a cold, crafty, subtle, treacherous, hypocritical slanderer. What had she done? Simply this; that having a few months since determined to part with him on account of the badness of his temper, and having subsequently received from him as gross an affront before the whole world as a woman ever received from a man of genius, and being fully informed of his manner of living in Switzerland, she declined his offer to hasten to her straight from Jane Clermont's arms.

More abuse of the same vindictive spirit came from the angry poet; the prayer for vengeance offered in some of the stateliest and most effective stanzas of the Fourth Canto of 'Childe Harold,' and the sarcasms of withering force and appalling vulgarity poured upon his 'moral Clytemnestra' in 'Don Juan.' It cannot be questioned that for his honour's sake he should never have spoken an ungenerous word of his fellow-sufferer from conjugal strife, that he dropt below the standard of gentle dignity whenever he tattled to her dishonour, and that he sunk deplorably far beneath it when he put pen to paper, for the purpose of rendering her ridiculous to those meanest readers of the great satire, who delighted only or chiefly in its disfigurements of ribaldry and uncleanness.

But it was impossible for the man of volcanic nature and tempestuous emotionality to speak coolly when he felt hotly, to write temperately when the vultures of grief and despair were pecking at his heart. The man, whose fickleness was a kind of honesty, whilst his sincerity consisted in obedience to every transient impulse, could neither hide nor falsify the impressions of the moment. It may not be imagined that, in speaking untruly and unjustly of his wife, he was deliberately untruthful and unjust. For the moment he believed all the wild things he said of her. To himself boiling with rage, the untruths were truths whenever they passed from his heated fancy to paper. It is conceivable that he never sent them to the press without still believing them. Nor may the tempestuous fury of the utterances be thought to indicate his deepest feeling for Ada's mother. Even as ocean's unseen waters are tranquil when the waves are storm-swept, Byron's ragings against his 'moral Clytemnestra' were only the superficial ferment, covering the depths of his affection for her. The woman at whom he railed so insanely was the woman who shared with his child and sister the last tender emotions of his unruly heart.

Returning to England by way of Dijon and Havre, the Shelleys left Geneva on the 29th of August. One of the consequences of Claire's passion may still have been unknown to the younger poet and Mary, but events must have prepared them for the communication when Claire told them how likely it was she would become a mother. Allegra was no child of premature birth. Already in the fifth month of her progress towards maternity, when she turned her back on Lake Lemman, Claire did not give Byron the parting kiss, without having spoken to him of her confident anticipation of offspring. The affair had been considered by Byron and the young girl from several points of view. It is not to Byron's discredit, under all the circumstances of the case, that he wished Claire to consent to an arrangement, by which her child would have been sent to Mrs. Leigh, for nurture with her own children. In making this proposal, the poet was no less considerate for the child, who would be well cared for in Cambridgeshire, than for Claire, who would soon find her child an embarrassment and a source of discredit. The project was, however, so distasteful to Miss Clermont that it was relinquished by Byron before he had consulted Augusta on the subject. It was then settled that Claire should return to England with the Shelleys, all questions (with a single exception) touching the child's nurture being deferred till the need for considering them should be more urgent. On one point, however, Claire gained a promise from Byron. Incapable in her nineteenth year of regarding the parental obligations from the high philosophic point of view, which possibly enabled her before she was twenty-four years old to commit with light heart and easy conscience a second child to a Foundling Hospital, Claire entreated Byron that her first-born offspring should be reared under the personal surveillance of the one or other of its parents, or both of them. If it should appear well for her to relinquish the custody of her infant, she would surrender the infant to Byron, and acquiesce in any plan he might propose for its education, *provided the child should live with him*. But to no other person would she give the charge of her offspring. Let Byron promise to gratify her in this important particular, and she would return to England with undiminished confidence in his goodness. If he would not grant her prayer, she should leave Geneva with a heavy heart,—even with regret for the blissful hours she had spent with him. To this petition, preferred so earnestly and in a conciliatory manner, Byron could not reply in the negative. The promise was given, and kept by the poet till he was induced, mainly by the Countess Guiccioli, to place the little Allegra in the conventual School at Bagna



Cavallo near Ravenna, where she died of fever, at the age stated in the following inscription of the tablet which commemorates her interment at Harrow, whither her body was sent at much expense from Italy :—‘ In Memory of Allegra, Daughter of G. G. Lord Byron, who died at Bagna Cavallo, in Italy, April 20, 1822, Aged Five Years and Three Months.—“ I shall go to her, but she shall not return to me.” 2 Samuel, xii. 23.’—The precise day of the child’s birth probably is not given in this brief history in marble. Anyhow, Claire had a baby at her breast as early as the 20th January, 1817.

Born in England, Allegra remained in England with her mother and the Shelleys till the 11th of March, 1818, when they took her with them to Italy ; her arrival in Milan being followed at a brief interval by her transmission to her father in Venice, when she was just a year and half old. Instead of being taken to him by Claire, the little girl came to her father’s palace in the charge of her Swiss nurse ;—an arrangement that may be attributed to Byron, who may also be presumed to have insisted on it, as a good way of intimating that, though willing to receive the child, he was not desirous of seeing the child’s mother. It would have been a poor compliment to her, had he invited Claire to reign over his house, which was in truth no fit residence for a woman with any sense of feminine dignity, or feminine refinement. Claire, however, accompanied Shelley to Venice in the following August, and soon saw enough of her former lover’s way of living, to be convinced that he was in no humour for a renewal of their former intimacy. If she came to Venice with any of her girlish illusion respecting his goodness and chivalry,—with the faintest hope that her presence would afford him pleasure,—the visit must have troubled her not a little. For Byron was already at the beginning of the darkest and most sordid stage of his Venetian depravity. The Palazzo Mocenigo was disreputable even in Venice. To call it a harem would be a flattery of the place and its proprietor. It would be more fairly described as the house of evil fame, where the poet received some of the coarsest and most vicious of the lowest class of Venetian womankind. Even his appearance must have shocked Claire ; so greatly had it suffered from excesses that would have revolted him in his brighter time. Such was the home, such the man to whom Claire (not yet twenty-one years of age) had sent her child.

If it was not irreproachable, Byron’s treatment of his illegitimate child was on the whole creditable to him. Thus much must be conceded even by his sternest censors. For awhile the by no means angelic child (she was greedy, passionate, and in



her fifth year precociously vain and saucy) was his favourite plaything and almost his only source of innocent diversion within his doors. He made a liberal provision for her in a codicil to his will; and when he determined to educate her in the Catholic faith, and for that purpose sent her to Bagna Cavallo, he was certainly actuated by sincere concern for the child's welfare. Even the Shelleys, with all their aversion to clerical influence, were of opinion that as a temporary expedient his action in sending his daughter to a Catholic school was justifiable and even judicious and conscientious. But Claire took a very different view of his conduct. Though Byron does not appear to have made any promises of enduring devotion, the romantic girl had not yielded to his addresses without imagining, in her simplicity, that an auspicious fate designed her to be Lady Byron's successor,—in fact, that she would be to him all her sister-by-affinity was already, and all she subsequently became to Shelley,—the sure holder of his heart, the mother of his children, and, in case of Lady Byron's opportune death, his wife in every sense. On discovering how greatly she had exaggerated her power over him, how strangely she had misconceived her position towards him, the fond and foolish girl imagined that his passion for her would revive on the appearance of their child,—that at least the child would be the enduring link of its parents' lives. It seemed to her that, should those lives be severed by any other cause than death, the child would be an influence operating for their reunion. All this was present to Claire's mind when, speaking chiefly from a higher motive and for a less selfish purpose, she begged that her child might be reared under the personal observation of the one or the other of its parents. An inmate of Byron's house, the child would be a reason why its mother could not be lightly denied access to his presence. Living with her, the child would at least dispose Byron, even if it would not constrain him, to maintain intercourse with its mother.

By sending the little girl to Bagna Cavallo, Byron extinguished Claire's hope that Allegra would restore her parents to relations of mutual confidence and affection. By the same act he also put an end to Claire's hope that Allegra would be trained to love and honour her mother. Reared in the Catholic faith, Allegra would conceive aversion for her mother, as a free-thinker and unbeliever,—living in heresy more hateful and impious than the heresy of Protestantism. The arrangement was the more exasperating to Claire, because she had good reason to regard it as the result of Madame Guiccioli's influence over Byron, to whose mobile affection Claire regarded herself as having a kind of

reversionary title, by virtue of the child she had given him. At Venice Byron smiled on several mistresses between the death of his fleeting passion for Claire and the birth of his stronger and more lasting attachment to the Italian Countess. But all these women (her inferiors in culture, quality, and even in beauty) Claire could regard as mere toys of the moment to her child's father. The least disreputable of them was a tradesman's wife, in whose house the poet had lodged. Most of them were creatures picked out of cellars or wine-shops. Some of them could neither write nor read. The most notorious of them, Margarita Cogni (the Fornarina with flashing eyes :—the baker's 'baggage' with a bold face and saucy tongue) was a mere black-guard in petticoats. No one of them had given the poet offspring. It was impossible for any one of these creatures to hold his affection for any considerable time, or to recover his fancy after once losing it. Claire never felt herself utterly and hopelessly superseded by any of these vulgar women. But the Italian Countess—girlish, beautiful, and Byron's equal in rank—was no charmer for Claire to regard with a scornful sense of superiority or an affectation of indifference. On the contrary, should the Countess give her protector a child, Claire saw an end of her failing hope of recovering Byron through his tenderness for her offspring. Nor was the Countess without a sense of peril from the possible revival of the poet's affection for Allegra's mother, who had beauty and cleverness, and belonged to the aristocracy of talent, though by birth she was only a London tradesman's daughter. There was no love lost between these two women. Knowing everything about one another, they lived in mutual fear and animosity. When a lady fibs, it is the part of civility to assume that she speaks from insufficient information. When she wrote of Mrs. Shelley's relative as an intrusive young person who forced herself on Byron's notice at Geneva, though he would gladly have avoided her, the Countess was speaking from insufficient information. Familiar with every particular of Claire's intercourse with Byron, the Countess detested her ;—hating her all the more because in the lightness with which Byron had tossed her from him (notwithstanding her child) there was a forewarning of the treatment in store for her successor, who could not flatter him with offspring. Dislike of Claire may have been one of the Countess's motives for urging Byron to send Allegra to school, and educate her to think her mother a heretic,—a misbeliever of an especially odious heresy. To the last the woman of noble birth and Italian blood detested the woman of English birth and southern temperament. When in her old age she put on paper the malicious reproduction of one



of Byron's 'bams' to Tom Medwin, as though it were sure historic evidence that the poet had *never* seduced any woman, the Countess was aware how the words would sting Claire (in her old age at Florence) should they come to her notice. After considering this neat and final thrust at poor Claire (old, poor, neglected, though never quite friendless), no one will deny that the Marquise de Boissy (rich, prosperous, and fêted) was—a woman of genius!

Under the circumstances it is not wonderful that the impulsive and hot-tempered Claire (now a young woman of twenty-three years of age) poured out the full vial of her wrath on the head of the man who had broken his promise that her child should be educated under the personal care of one or the other parent. No wonder she taunted the nobleman with breaking his word of honour, passed with the utmost solemnity to the generous and artless girl, who had loved him in the belief that he was good. No wonder that she charged him with meanness and cruelty; that she asked him with scornful sarcasm whether the purity of his principles forbade him to cherish his natural daughter with paternal tenderness; that she declared the education given to girls in conventual schools was chiefly accountable for the ignorance and profligacy of Italian women, whose licentiousness made them dishonourable and grievous to society; that she told him Lady Byron (ever watchful of his movements and condemned by many people for casting him from her) would hear with delight of his behaviour to Allegra and Allegra's mother, and rejoice in the honourable security of herself and Ada; that she assured him the announcement of his purpose towards the child in his power would be received in England as a justification of the severest censures passed upon him by his bitterest enemies! Passing from passionate invective to plaintive entreaty, Claire entreated Byron that he would at least give her back the child she had committed to him, so that she might educate her as an English girl ought to be educated,—in a way that would at least afford the child a chance of growing to be an affectionate daughter to the only one of her parents who really loved her. By consenting to her prayer Claire told Byron he would be the gainer in credit and (with a sarcastic note on the *word* which she felt would go straight to the poet's heart)—in *purse*. The child should never again cost him a penny. She (Claire) would put her to a good English school, and pay her charges there. She was able to do so,—would gladly do so. The school should be chosen by his own friends in England. Yet further, the petitioner would bind herself to see the child no oftener than *his* friends should think fit. But passion, sarcasm, pathos,



entreaty, were all in vain. The father was unyielding, The mother might as well have offered her supplications to a block of stone; the justification of his obduracy being his belief that Claire had no strong affection for her offspring or any one but herself,—had planted one of her children in a Foundling,—was at that very time living in concubinage with Shelley under Mrs. Shelley's roof,—was in fact an equally shameless and saucy actress in the whole affair. He stood firm. And Allegra was sent to Bagna Cavallo,—to die there in the following year.

To return to the Villa Diodati, where Byron had a few days to himself between the departure of the Shelleys and the arrival of Hobhouse and Scrope Davies. Pained to learn how inauspiciously matters had gone at Geneva for the poet's reputation, the new comers were delighted at the change for the better in their friend's health, temper, spirits, habits of life, and appearance. They observed with pleasure the poet's total abstinence from brandy, in which he had indulged far too freely in London during the domestic troubles. No longer drinking soda-water to excess, Byron was living (as he had lived ever since his coming to Switzerland) with a strict temperance, bordering on severe abstemiousness, in eating and drinking. His hours of going to rest and rising from bed were not reprehensibly late; he was neither passionate nor perverse; and he talked calmly of his misfortunes, even of his wife's last exhibition of cruelty in declining to receive him again into her favour, without giving his friends any of those violent hysterical ejaculations with which he had so often startled and even terrified them in Piccadilly. Though some of his remarks on 'Glenarvon' and Lady Caroline Lamb were animated with indignation, he spoke of the book and its writer without immoderate anger. Upon the whole he looked happy and was happy.

In the later time of September (from the 17th to the 29th inclusive), when Scrope Davies had gone off for England, the poet and Hobhouse made the thirteen days' tour in the Bernese Oberland, particulars of which may be found in Moore's 'Extracts' from the diary which Byron kept during the excursion for the entertainment of his sister. After perusing her brother's narrative—overflowing with evidence that he had enjoyed the trip with the same boyish heartiness, that distinguished his enjoyment of the tour round Lake Lemman with Shelley—Mrs. Leigh (notwithstanding her knowledge of his disposition) must have been astonished by the suddenness with which he passed in the Journal's concluding paragraph from gladness to gloom. 'But in all this,' says the writer, turning from the sunshine of

his unconstrained cheerfulness and even hilarity, and plunging instantaneously into the blackest depths of melancholy ; 'but in all this—the recollection of bitterness, and more especially of recent and more home desolation, which must accompany me through life, have preyed upon me here ; and neither the music of the shepherd, the crashing of the avalanche, nor the torrent, the mountain, the glacier, the forest, nor the cloud, have for one moment lightened the weight upon my heart, nor enabled me to lose my own wretched identity in the majesty, and the power, and the glory, around, above, and beneath me.' There is something comical in this sudden drop into despair of the young man, who had just been snowballing Hobbouse on the Wengern Alp and laughing till he almost cracked his sides at the repeated falls of his mountain guide. The wail, however, was no mere affectation of melancholy. Ludicrously untruthful as to his feelings during the trip,—no less so than his wild indictment of his false and malignant wife,—the woeful words were sincere to the impression of the moment. High and long-maintained elation of spirits was succeeded by corresponding depression ; and in the sadness that possessed his soul, it really seemed to him that he had made the tour in deepest gloom.

The tour had brought him back to the Château Diodati. A few days later (after a farewell dinner at Coppet), his sojourn in Switzerland was a thing of the past. On the 15th of October, 1816, he was writing gaily from Milan to Murray about the love-letters of Lucretia Borgia and Cardinal Bembo.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Though assertions of innocence are not proofs of innocence, they may carry conviction of innocence. Shelley's passionate declaration of innocence in respect to Claire belongs to a kind of demonstration that, to generous and sympathetic judges, is more conclusive than legal evidence. On hearing the charges he took the course he could not have taken had he been guilty. Knowing that his assertion was a mere plea of 'Not guilty,' he called his wife as a witness. A witness for Claire as well as for her husband, Mrs. Shelley reproaches Mrs. Hoppner for 'trying to convince the father of her,' *i. e.* Claire's, 'child of such unheard-of atrocities on her part.' Shelley's letter of passionate appeal to his wife, and his letter in acknowledgment of her reply, satisfied me of Shelley's innocence, and made me suggest that possibly Claire was no less innocent. I cannot say much more for Claire now that I have perused the letter Mrs. Shelley wrote for Mrs. Hoppner's eye. I can only express the same opinion with stronger emphasis. For obvious reasons Mrs. Shelley's evidence is less effectual for Claire than for her husband ; Claire being less constantly under her observation. If Mr. Froude judges Claire fairly, she was likely to be guilty of a second slip. But I am sure he does her injustice. It is much, but not enough, in her favour, that Mrs. Shelley was so indignant for her. One more point ; Byron's neglect to transmit Mrs. Shelley's letter to Mrs. Hoppner, though Shelley wrote to his wife that Byron had 'engaged to send it with his comments.' Byron may only have undertaken to transmit the substance of the letter, and may have done so. The inexactness of Shelley's spoken and written



## CHAPTER XIX.

## VENICE :—BYRON'S DEPRAVATION.

Marianna Segati—Convent of St. Lazarus—Madame Albrizzi and Madame Benzoni—Malarial Fever—Byron at Home—'Count Maddalo'—Allegra at Venice—The Pecuniary Resources—His Literary Earnings—Sale of Newstead—Poet and Salesman—Gallops on the Lido—Sordid Dissipation—The Poet's Home-sickness and Irritability—His Alarming Illness—His Recovery and Reappearance in Society.

FROM Milan the friends went to Verona, and from Verona to Venice, where Byron became the tenant of the best rooms in the house of a linendraper, in an extremely narrow street,—the Spezeria of Moore's narrative, the Merceria of Karl Elze's text. To give the tradesman a rank befitting the honour about to be conferred on his wife (a young woman, with large black eyes, an Italian countenance, and dark glossy hair resembling Lady Jersey's tresses in curl and colour) Byron styled him 'a Merchant of Venice who is a good deal occupied in business.' Whilst the draper was serving his customers, Byron made love to Marianna Segati, the young person who in one of her natural endowments was comparable with the English Countess and in another surpassed the antelope; and as the merchant had fewer customers and less credit than he needed for his affairs, he was sufficiently prudent to give his shop more attention than he gave his wife. The several parties to the triangular arrangement, which gave Marianna a niche in the temple of fame, acted with equal promptitude and harmony. Coming to Venice in the middle of November, Byron was on the seventeenth of the month writing rapturously to Moore about the lady's merits. For several months Marianna was a very goddess to the poet, who, finding music in her voice, beauty in her face, sunlight in her eyes, humour in her persiflage, and voluptuous grace in her form, paid the price of her

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words about his most important affairs is well known. He certainly consented to postpone communication with the Hoppners, in order to give Byron time to put the case to them, so as not to seem to have told the story to their needless discredit. No mere comments would effect that object, if the Hoppners were allowed to see Mrs. Shelley's letter. The grounds on which Shelley consented to a postponement of the communication seem to imply his consent that the letter should be withheld. Had Byron kept back the letter from any of the villainous motives, hinted at by Mr. Froude, he would surely have destroyed it. That he kept the document favours the notion that he retained it honestly. It remains (*Vide* the letter to Murray from Pisa) that Byron continued to regard Claire as having had, or as a woman likely to have had, another child besides Allegra.



concessions with ungrudging liberality. Forbearing to murmur at the 'inflammation of his weekly bills,' the poet relieved Segati's financial distress with timely munificence, and made presents of jewellery to Marianna,—on one occasion giving her the set of diamonds, which she sold with an unromantic alacrity, that enabled him a few weeks later to buy them again for her encouragement in thrift.

Had she been of noble birth and style, the poet's admiration of his pretty landlady could not have been more fervid or fruitful of delicate homage; and the puerile delight with which he paraded his easy conquest to the light-tongued Venetians must have reminded Hobhouse of the effrontery with which Lord Byron of Trinity had in former time called everyone's attention to his girl in boy's clothing. Providing himself with a gondola, and taking a box at the Phoenix Theatre, he was seldom seen at places of public amusement without his mistress, whose lessons in the Venetian dialect he repaid with instruction in the art of loving. 'I am still,' he wrote to Murray on the 27th of December, 1816, 'dreadfully in love with the Adriatic lady whom I spoke of in a former letter; and love in this part of the world is no sinecure.' Devotion to this siren of the shop-board had caused him to decline accompanying Hobhouse to Rome, where however the friends met in the ensuing May. At the same time he found a worthier field of diversion at the convent of St. Lazarus, whither he went daily in his gondola to gossip with the monks and aid them in the composition of their English-Armenian grammar, towards the publication of which work he contributed a thousand francs.

He went also to other places besides the Armenian monastery, where he could not introduce Marianna. No longer preferring seclusion to society, now that he was in a city of lighter morals than Geneva, he attended the Count Governor's receptions, where the Patriarch of Venice smiled benedictions on a motley crew of Austrians and Germans, very much in the style of the Bishop of Winchester in the drawing-rooms of Mayfair. At the same time he became a regular frequenter of the circle of Isabella Teotochi, Countess Albrizzi, known for her writings and conversational brightness as the De Stäel of Venice, 'not young' (he wrote to Moore on 24th December, 1816), 'but a very learned, unaffected, good-natured woman, very polite to strangers, and, I believe, not at all dissolute as most of the women are.' Whilst the lady won this meed of cold and dubious approval from her famous visitor, the De Stäel of Venice wrote rapturously of his genius and personal endowments. 'It would be to little purpose,' she exclaims in her

book of 'Portraits,' 'to dwell upon the mere beauty of a countenance in which the expression of an extraordinary mind was so conspicuous. What serenity was seated on the forehead, adorned with fine chestnut hair, light, curling, and disposed with such art, that the art was hidden in the imitation of most pleasing nature! What varied expression in his eyes! They were of the azure colour of the heavens, from which they seemed to derive their origin. His teeth, in form, in colour, in transparency, resembled pearls; but his cheeks were too delicately tinged with the hue of the pale rose. His neck, which he was in the habit of keeping uncovered as much as the usages of society permitted, seemed to have been formed in a mould, and was very white. His hands were as beautiful as if they had been the works of art.' It was thus that the Italian Countess spoke of her idol in the sketch, which he declined to correct for the press, or even to peruse in manuscript, and at the instigation of caprice or caution begged her to give to the flames instead of the world. Offended with the lady for not taking his advice on a matter about which he had a moral title to command, Byron withdrew from her circle, and to her lively chagrin went over to the *salon* of her rival, the Countess Benzoni, where—after a period that without extravagance may be designated the period of his darkest depravity—he fell in love with Teresa Guiccioli, who wrote to Moore after her hero's death, 'His noble and exquisitely beautiful countenance, the tone of his voice, his manners, the thousand enchantments that surrounded him, rendered him so different and so superior a being to any whom I had hitherto seen, that it was impossible he should not have left the most profound impression on me. From that evening, during the whole of my subsequent stay at Venice, we met every day.'

The Carnival of 1817 had not ended, before Byron, suffering from the malaria of the canals, was sickening for another severe assault of the same disease which had so nearly killed him when he was in Greece, and which, after repeated attacks on a constitution fretted by fitful dissipation and broken by persistence in the suicidal diet to which so frequent reference has been made in these pages, laid him on his bed of death in Missolonghi. The severity of his present illness was due in some degree to nervous prostration, resulting from the late hours and violent excitements of the Carnival, into whose dissipations he had hurled himself with the wild vehemence and delirious energy of a libertine, bent on indemnifying himself by extravagant excess for previous privations of pleasure. The man who had lived so long out of the world at Geneva, and had spent the



subsequent weeks with more than his customary abstinence from festal extravagances, now leapt into the licentious freedom of the universal holiday with a passionate appetite for gaiety,—even as the drunkard or gambler springs to the bottle or the hazard-table after a long term of restraint from his favourite enjoyment. ‘The Carnival,’ he wrote to Moore on 28 February, 1817, ‘that is, the latter part of it, and sitting up late o’ nights, had knocked me up a little.’ On the third of the following month he writes to Murray, ‘Ever since the conclusion of the Carnival I have been unwell, and have hardly stirred out of the house. . . . My malady is a sort of lowish fever, originating from what my “pastor and master,” Jackson, would call “taking too much out of one’s self!”’ Three weeks later (25 March, 1817) he says to Moore, ‘I have been very ill with a slow fever, which at last took to flying, and became as quick as need be. But, at length, after a week of half-delirium, burning skin, thirst, hot headache, horrible pulsation, and no sleep, by the blessing of barley-water, and refusing to see any physician, I recovered. It is an epidemic of the place, which is annual, and visits strangers.’ That the sufferer recognized the identity of the fever which struck him down in the Morea with the fever which gave Marianna an opportunity for displaying her nursery skill, appears from a note he penned with a weak hand to his London publisher.

Shaking off the fever, which was raising the mortality of Venice far above its usual unhealthy average, Byron in the middle of April escaped from the city of death to Rome (pausing by the way at Ferrara, Florence and Foligno),—the trip that gave us the finest stanzas of the Fourth Canto of ‘Childe Harold.’ From Rome (where the poet dined with Lord Lansdowne, sate for the familiar bust to Thorwaldsen, and rode to the various points of interest on the saddle-horses he had brought with him from Venice) Hobhouse would fain have lured Byron to Naples; but the man of feeling was pining too keenly for Marianna to acquiesce in the proposal for an extension of his tour, and of his term of absence from the young woman who, having captivated him by her lovely face and musical voice, had won a deeper corner of his heart by the affectionate assiduity of her ministrations to him during his severe illness. This longing for the woman, whom he parted from lightly enough some months later, even caused him to shorten his stay in Rome, after making up his mind to remain there till the beginning of June. Inviting her to meet him on his backward way (an invitation that was obeyed with alacrity), Byron returned with Marianna at his side to her husband’s



house on the 28th May. In the middle of the next month, the poet and his mistress (without the draper's presence, but doubtless with his approval) were living at La Mira on the Brenta in the house (at an easy distance from the City of the Sea) that Byron henceforth used as a place of rural retreat till the close of his sojourn at Venice; the same villa to which he carried Teresa Guiccioli, some two years after he had hinted to Marianna that it would be well for her to leave it.

The precise time at which Byron and the draper's wife parted company does not appear. Nor is anything known of the circumstances that put an end to the liaison. The probable explanation of the matter is that Byron grew weary of her, as he was wont to grow weary of the objects of his sentimental tenderness, and that Marianna was pricked, by the signs of his growing disaffection, to ebullitions of anger. Whatever its immediate cause, and however sudden at last, the severance certainly was not premature. After re-purchasing the diamonds so recently given her, Byron may well have thought it time for him to seek for another recipient of his favours.

That Marianna Segati was no woman to endure slights meekly and smile under a sense of injury may be inferred from a scene of which Byron was a spectator in the opening stage of their friendship. The Carnival of 1817 was at its height, and the poet's passion for his new mistress was the talk of Venice, when he received from a gondolier a note inviting him to meet the fair writer, who had withheld her name from the billet. His reply was that he should be alone at home at ten o'clock of the ensuing night, or at the *ridotto* two hours later, and would gladly speak with his anonymous correspondent at either place. At the earlier hour he was in his lodgings (Marianna having gone with her husband to a *conversazione*), when a young and pretty girl entered his room of audience and lost no time in informing him that she was Marianna's sister-in-law, and wished to speak with him respecting his intimacy with the lady, to whom she was so nearly related. The conversation had not proceeded far in Italian and Romaic, when Marianna Segati with fury in her handsome face and dark eyes rushed into the room, seized her meddlesome sister-in-law by the hair, and gave her sixteen violent slaps on the face;—'slaps,' Byron wrote to Moore, 'which would have made your ear ache only to hear their echo.' After seeing the back of her enemy, who fled instantly from the scene and spectator of her sharp chastisement, Marianna went off into hysterics in the arms of her admirer, who was still bringing her round with eau-de-Cologne and endearments when Segati (the linendraper) entered the room,

to make observations that should be serviceable to him in coming to terms with the disturber of his domestic happiness. The woman's true nature revealed itself in this outbreak of rage. Possessing beauty of face and figure, some cleverness of speech, the taste in dress and other matters of personal adornment to be looked for in a smart young milliner, and the power of singing to be regarded almost as a matter of course in persons of her race and clime, Marianna Segati was a mere creature of the common bourgeoisie. It shows how much Byron had already suffered, how much more he was likely to suffer, from close intimacy with so ordinary and unrefined a woman, that he was agreeably diverted by her behaviour to her intrusive sister-in-law, and, worse still! was so highly amused and delighted by the whole affair, as to think it worth his while and consistent with his dignity and poetic sensibility, to give his brother in poesy (Moore) a long account of so sordid a business.

It would have been to his advantage,—or rather let us say, it would have been less to his disadvantage,—in his dealings with women of Marianna's low quality, and the viler women for whom she may be said to have debased him, had Byron been able to approach them with passion altogether divorced from sympathy and every kind of emotional tenderness. Had he regarded her as nothing more than an instrument of diversion, his unedifying association with Marianna Segati would not have disposed him for another and greater descent in the scale of refinement, and prepared him for communion with mistresses of ruder manners and worse morals. Less harm would have come to him from the creatures, who composed the vagrant harem of the Palazzo Mocenigo, had he possessed the cynical hardness and spiritual grossness to think of them as animals, differing from the brutes only in shape and speech. But the softness of his nature prevented him from taking so disdainful a view of the *filles-de-joie* who frequented his palace on the Grand Canal. However dissolute she might be, the woman he regarded with passion became for a moment the object of an affection that was no less tender than transient. To call it love would be a profanation; but no less sacred word would adequately describe the fleeting sentiment of perverted sympathy and debasing admiration with which he cherished these miserable beings, after descending from the moral elevation of culture and genius to their almost lowest level of human existence. Hence his strange and even appalling delight in their exhibitions of caprice and jealousy, in the humour of their sorry jests, and in the piquancy of their vulgar persiflage. In the whole story of our literature few



things can be found more painfully humiliating and dismally shocking to readers of average taste and sensibility than Byron's confessions of delight in Margarita Cogni's colloquial sprightliness, and the pains he took to record some of her sauciest speeches :—speeches that, heard from the lips of any wanton walker of the London pavements, would cause decent people to hasten beyond earshot.

After restoring Marianna Segati to her rightful owner, Byron had established himself in his stately palace (the Palazzo Mocenigo) on the Grand Canal, and was fast sinking to the darkest depths of his Venetian depravity, when the Shelleys and Jane Clermont paid him the visit to which reference has already been made. Occupying the villa I Capuccini, near Este (which Byron had recently hired of Hoppner, and now put at the service of Claire and her friends), Shelley spent the several weeks in the neighbourhood of Venice, during which he wrote 'Julian and Maddalo,'—a work scarcely more memorable as a monument of its author's genius than valuable as a piece of Byron's history. 'Count Maddalo,' the author remarks in the introductory note to his poem, 'is a Venetian nobleman of ancient family and of good fortune, who, without mixing much in the society of his countrymen, resides chiefly at his magnificent palace in that city. He is a person of the most consummate genius, and capable, if he would direct his energies to such an end, of becoming the redeemer of his degraded country. But it is his weakness to be proud : he derives, from a comparison of his own extraordinary mind with the dwarfish intellects that surround him, an intense apprehension of the nothingness of human life. His passions and his powers are incomparably greater than those of other men ; and, instead of the latter having been used in curbing the former, they have mutually lent each other strength. His ambition preys upon itself, for want of objects which it can consider worthy of exertion. I say that Maddalo is proud, because I can find no other word to express the concentrated and impatient feelings which consume him ; but it is on his own hopes and affections only that he seems to trample, for in social life no human being can be more gentle, patient, and unassuming, than Maddalo. He is cheerful, frank, and witty. His more serious conversation is a kind of intoxication ; men are held by it as by a spell. He has travelled much, and there is an inexpressible charm in his relation of his adventures in different countries.' This notable estimate of Byron's character and powers, formed at a moment when they were seen even by Shelley under disadvantageous circumstances, is followed in the poem by this pleasant picture of the child,



who had now been for some six months under her father's care :

'The following morn was rainy, cold, and dim,  
Ere Maddalo arose, I called on him ;  
And, whilst I waited, with his child I played,  
A lovelier toy sweet Nature never made ;  
A serious, subtle, wild, yet gentle being ;  
Graceful without design, and unforeseeing ;  
With eyes—oh speak not of her eyes ! which seem  
Twin mirrors of Italian heaven, yet gleam  
With such deep meaning as we never see  
But in the human countenance. With me  
She was a special favourite : I had nursed  
Her fine and feeble limbs when she came first  
To this bleak world ; and she yet seemed to know  
On second sight her ancient playfellow,  
Less changed than she was by six months or so,  
For, after her first shyness was worn out,  
We sate there, rolling billiard balls about,—  
When the Count entered.'

It has been already remarked that Allegra was by no means the angelic child Byronic enthusiasts have delighted to imagine her. If she had inherited from her sire the blue eyes together with other personal characteristics, that were conspicuous elements of *his* infantile loveliness, she had also inherited from the same parent the vehement temper, the wilfulness and probably also the greediness, which distinguished her from an early season of her brief existence. That she was the lovely toy Shelley declared her in her second year can be readily imagined. But that she was not altogether lovely at a later time appears from the testimony of her father, and also of Mr. Hoppner who, having enjoyed even better opportunities than her father for observing the child's propensities, wrote to the '*Athenæum*' in 1869, 'She was not by any means an amiable child, nor was Mrs. Hoppner or I particularly fond of her.'

The time has come for another glance at the poet's financial position, and a precise statement of his pecuniary resources during the earlier years of his exile. There is the more need for this statement, as he has been charged with squandering his wife's money on his pleasures in Italy.

Had he been disposed to live in wasteful luxury on Lady Byron's fortune, he could not have done so, for the simple reason that her modest fortune was in the hands of her trustees. Till her mother's death in February 1822, Lady Byron had no considerable possessions,—nothing, that her husband could touch. After Lady Noel's death, indeed, Byron took his lawful share of the income accruing to himself and his wife from the Wentworth property, in accordance with the arrangement of the arbitrators

appointed for the equitable division of a revenue of some seven or eight thousand a year. Whatever may be urged on the question of delicacy and chivalrous magnanimity, he was under no obligation of honour to do otherwise. It would have been quixotic generosity on his part to decline the tardy enrichment, that was a poor compensation for the material injury he had sustained from the luckless marriage, which had in other respects been so disastrous to his interests. It has been shown that Miss Milbanke was no great match for him at the time of the first offer, when his pecuniary prospects and almost cloudless celebrity would have justified him in seeking the hand of a woman of greater wealth and higher rank. It has been shown that even on the bridal day, when his circumstances were somewhat less auspicious and his embarrassments more urgent, she still remained a poor match for a man of his eminence and estate. It has been seen that he made a large settlement upon her,—a settlement that may almost be called prodigious, so greatly disproportionate was it to her fortune and his own estate,—a settlement that enriched her for so long a period after his death. One result of this settlement was that Lady Byron's trustees, after the sale of Newstead to Colonel Wildman, precluded him from the expansion of income he might have obtained from an investment on mortgage of Lord Blessington's Dublin property at six per cent. per annum. As Lady Byron took the full advantage of the marriage-settlement, which affected her husband so injuriously, it is not obvious why he should have forbore to take the share of the revenue from the Wentworth property, which he had in a certain sense purchased with that deed of endowment. Possibly some readers of this page may share Moore's regret that the poet did not persist in his original purpose never to touch a guinea of his wife's money. But whatever cause there may be for regret, there appears no ground for severe censure. Byron's action in the matter differs widely from that of the man who, having given her nothing, insists on taking much from the woman with whom he is at war ; for he had paid heavily for the marriage, which cost him so much in happiness and honour. Anyhow the event of 1822 had no effect on his way of living from the summer of 1816 till the sale of Newstead placed him in more than easy circumstances. Nor is he chargeable with spending on his selfish enjoyments the money that came to him from Lady Byron's possessions during the last two years of his existence. For a considerable period before Lady Noel's death, he had lived well within his income, saving his money (sometimes saving it in ways that justly exposed him to imputations

of avarice and niggardliness), for the achievement of one or another of his several romantic projects for distinguishing himself as a man of action. The enterprise to which he eventually devoted the money from his wife's revenue was the cause to which he gave his own life.

The failure of his overture from Geneva for reconciliation with his wife may have been in some degree accountable for Byron's dismissal of the notion that his nobility forbade him to use his literary emoluments for his personal comfort. Reunion with Lady Byron, attended with a readjustment of his affairs by the aid of her father and mother, would probably have encouraged him to persist in a resolution which he could not have abandoned without rudely shocking their feelings. In England and with the Noels about him, it would probably have been out of his power to get the better of the false sentiment, from which he liberated himself with difficulty in a foreign land. Even under the circumstances most favourable to his independence and discretion, he had a sharp conflict with his pride before he came to a wise resolve on the question of honour, which his financial embarrassments had for some time been forcing upon his consideration. On coming to Venice with no readier source of sufficient income than his genius, Byron determined to do what four years since he would have blushed to think of doing, what two years since his enemies on the London press had accused him of doing, what his defenders on the same press had warmly declared him innocent and even incapable of doing,—to use the earnings of his pen, precisely as he used the rents from his Nottinghamshire farms, and had used the money lent him on extortionate terms by London usurers. Readers may well smile at the time Byron took and the pain he underwent in coming to this determination. But they must remember that the question which the poet was so slow in answering so sensibly, was by no means the simple question it may appear at the present day. Seventy years since had the opinion of the whole English nobility been taken individually on the question whether a nobleman could without dishonour write for money, whether in plain terms he could without disgrace habitually take wages for the work of his pen, it is probable that no single voice would have answered in the affirmative,—that on the contrary every reply would have been an indignant 'no.' Had a far larger class of Englishmen, the whole body of the gentlemen of Great Britain, been polled on the question whether a peer of the realm might follow literature as a way of livelihood, ninety-and-nine out of every hundred of them would have answered unhesitatingly in the negative. And the matter just now in debate with



Byron was not, how he might or might not use the money coming to him now and then from occasional exertions of his literary faculty, but whether he might habitually apply to his private use and personal advantage the strong and steady stream of affluence flowing to him in regular current from the sale of his writings. Whether a nobleman might be an author by profession was a large question, involving several nice questions. In the world's history the question had never been raised before. England had produced royal authors by the dozen, noble authors by the hundred, but never a nobleman brought face to face with the question whether he might and should earn, as an author by profession, an income adequate to his rank, and apply it to his private necessities. In answering this question by open action, directly in opposition to the prejudices of his order and the sentiment of all English society, Byron displayed at least as much moral courage as any nobleman would have shown in declining a challenge on the ground of his conscientious disapproval of duelling.

The magnitude of the revenue that came to Byron from his pen during the five years immediately ensuing on his withdrawal from England may be seen from the following data, taken from Murray's published list of payments to the poet, and the same publisher's 'Chronology of Lord Byron's Life and Works':

1816 A.D.	Siege of Corinth	...	...	£525
"	Parisina	...	...	525
"	3rd Canto of Childe Harold	...	...	1,575
"	Prisoner of Chillon	...	...	525
1817	Lament of Tasso	...	...	315
"	Manfred	...	...	315
"	Beppo	...	...	525
1818	4th Canto of Childe Harold	...	...	2,100
"	Mazeppa	...	...	525
1819	Don Juan I., II.	...	...	1,525
1820	Doge of Venice	...	...	1,050
1821	Don Juan III., IV., V.	...	...	1,525
"	Sardanapalus, Cain, Foscari	...	...	1,100
—	Sundries	...	...	450
				5)12,580

Average Receipts for five years ... £2,516

What portion of the payments put together under 'Sundries' was paid in the first two years of this period does not appear; but at least 200*l.* of the 450*l.* (Sundries) came to the poet before he had been two full years away from England. As the poem was not finished till October 1818, the price (525*l.*) for 'Mazeppa' may not be included in the receipts of these first two years. The poet's receipts for the two years (the 1050*l.* for the 'Siege of Corinth' and 'Parisina' being included in them, though the

poems were written in England) may be computed at 6605*l.*,—a trifle over 3300*l.* a-year. In considering the value of this income at the time when it was earned, readers must bear in mind the greatness of the depreciation of gold during the last sixty years. 3300*l.* in the years 1816-17 and 1817-18 were at least equivalent to 5000*l.* of English gold at the present time.

Other matters must also be had in consideration by readers who would get a fair view of Byron's pecuniary position in the two years, closing with the sale of Newstead to Colonel Wildman,—the sale (negotiated in November 1817 and completed in the summer of 1818) that has been already mentioned as placing the poet in affluence. From his coming to Geneva at the close of May 1816 to the end of the year he lived economically. During the earlier part of his residence on the shore of Lake Lemán he certainly kept no horses. At Venice we have seen the poet living in lodgings for a considerable period, before he took the villa at La Mira. Cheap at the present day, living at Venice in Byron's time was marvellously cheap in comparison with living in London. Perhaps all Europe contained no capital of gaiety and fashion, where the lover of pleasure could live luxuriously at a smaller expenditure. Byron's box for the season at the Phoenix Theatre cost him only a trifle; the prices for the best places at the Opera were insignificant; the cost of his gondola was a bagatelle in comparison with the expense of a London carriage; the riot and fun of the *ridotto* were to be had for a few francs a visit; the total sum of the wages given to his Italian servants fell short of what he would have paid an English butler; his palace on the Grand Canal (not taken, by the way, till the purchase-money of Newstead was on the point of being paid) he held at a yearly rent of two hundred louis, which was deemed an exorbitant rent for one of the stateliest houses of Venice. Moreover, Byron was habitually economical in several matters on which the indulgent are prone to be lavish. Whilst dullness of palate denied him the finest enjoyments, it saved him from the heaviest expenses of the epicure. The man, who could not distinguish between stale fish and fresh fish, had small need of a consummate *chef*, and no disposition to squander money on delicate dishes and the costlier wines. Faring like an anchorite when he was heedful for his figure, he was content with common viands and ordinary drinks when he lived freely. It is not wonderful, therefore, that with an income of 3300*l.* a-year before the sale of Newstead, he could live showily and distinguish himself by keeping saddle-horses at Venice.

Having decided after a sharp struggle with his pride to follow as a gainful profession what he had hitherto regarded only as an

elegant pastime, it was natural for Byron to overact the part of the mercenary poet and give undue prominence to the prudential motive of his industry, alike in his dealings with his publisher and in correspondence with his brethren of the tuneful craft. It was not enough for him to take and spend the money sent him by his publisher. Together with the new purpose he assumed the new part of an author greedy for gain, suspicious of his publisher's fairness, haggling for better terms, fighting for the extra shillings that turn pounds to guineas, set not only on making money, but on making as much money as possible. Sometimes this grasping game is played with good-humour, but quite as often with pugnacity and insolence. After announcing the completion of the Fourth Canto of 'Childe Harold' he writes to Murray (July 20, 1817): 'And now for our barter. What do you bid? eh? you shall have samples, an' it so please you; but I wish to know what I am to expect (as the saying is) in these hard times.' To get a good bid for the Canto, he hints that he may throw 'some odd matters to the lot—translations or slight originals;' but he will not part with a single 'make-weight' till the publisher has done 'the handsome thing.' There is hard fighting between the author and publisher before they come to terms; the man of 'the trade' offering 1500 guineas whilst the man of poetry demands 2500 guineas,—no excessive price, he avers, 'if Mr. Eustace was to have had two thousand for a poem on education; if Mr. Moore is to have three thousand for "Lalla," &c.; if Mr. Campbell is to have three thousand for his prose on poetry.' Far be it from him to say a word in disparagement of those gentlemen, whose works are considerably longer than his Fourth Canto of 'The Childe,' but he asks 2300 guineas for the Canto and won't take less. Eventually the hagglers split the difference; and Byron gets 2100*l.*—a stupendous payment for so few verses. In the first month of the following year (January 8, 1818) Byron opens another battle for terms with the rhyming letter that ends with the lines,

'For the man, "poor and shrewd,"  
With whom you'd conclude  
A compact without more delay,  
Perhaps some such pen is  
Still extant in Venice;  
But please, sir, to mention *your pay*.'

By this time the ring of money on the shop-counter had become musical to the ear of the poet, who on relinquishing the rôle of the noble amateur of letters, skilful with the pen and disdainful of its profits, overplayed thus curiously the character of a writer for wages. 'I once wrote,' he assures his publisher in an epistle



dated from Venice on July 17, 1818, 'from the fulness of my mind and the love of fame (not as an *end*, but as a *means*, to obtain that influence over men's minds which is power in itself and in its consequences), and now from habit and from avarice.' Persisting with equal vehemence and insincerity in this part of a mercenary scribe, he delighted in it even to the moment when, suddenly chucking up the pen, he seized the sword and hastened to Greece to figure as the liberator of an oppressed people. 'John Murray, my patron and paymaster,' he cried to Shelley at Pisa, 'says my plays won't act. I don't mind that, for I told him they were not written for the stage—but he adds, my poesy won't sell; that I do mind, for I have an "itching palm."' A day or two later this poet with an itching palm observed to Trelawny, in a vein of petty boastfulness of his gains from 'Don Juan,' 'To-night I shall write thirty more lines, and that will finish a canto—a thousand guineas. Murray now says pounds: I won't be stinted of my sizings. Murray told Tom Moore he was no judge of the morality; but sermons did not sell, and the "Don" had a "devil of a sale."'

In the 'Diary of an Invalid' Matthews remarks, 'In Venice there are only eight horses; four are of brass and stand above the entrance to the cathedral; the other four are alive and stand in Lord Byron's stable.' Like other stud-owners the poet had more horses on his hands at one time than at another. Matthews speaks of four, Hoppner of three, and Byron himself of four, and also of as many as five and as few as two horses in his stable. The number given by Hoppner seems to have been the usual force of animals for the saddle, standing in the stable which the poet hired of the commandant on the Lido—one of the long narrow islands, lying between the Adriatic sea and the Lagune of Venice. After transporting his horses in January 1818 to this stable, where he kept them till he left Venice for good, Byron—if he was not too ill to leave home—visited the Lido daily for exercise on horseback, crossing the water from his palace on the Grand Canal in something less than three-quarters of an hour, more often than not in the company of a friend whom he had invited to ride with him. Tourists who would visit the spot where the poet was seen to the best advantage during his long stay in the City of the Sea should take a gondola to the Lido, with its sand-beach towards the Adriatic, its sweep of market-gardens towards the Lagune, and the two forts (about three miles apart) between which he found a fair though by no means faultless riding-ground. It was on this sand-strip that Byron rode with Hobhouse and Shelley, gossiping with them about the latest news and newest books from England, and in

default of a better comrade with Consul-General Hoppner,—a man of society and worldly shrewdness, who was nearly of the same age as the poet. Some of the pleasantest pages of Moore's 'Life' are those that relate to Byron's gallops on the Lido, whither the English tourists used to come, for the sake of seeing the poet alight from his boat and mount his horse. Had it not been for the exercise he took on this narrow island, and the fresh breezes that came from the Adriatic waves to his wan face, whether he scudded at his horse's fullest speed or lounged musingly in his saddle at foot-pace, Byron, stricken by the malaria of the canals, and enervated by debauchery, would probably have found his grave—where he meant it to be in case he died at Venice—under the sand of the Lido.

Though enough has been said for the description of the excesses, to be hinted at rather than calendered in these pages, something must be observed of the causes and effects of the vicious habits into which he fell in 1818. Moore would have us believe that, just as a naughty little boy leaps into a big puddle in mere defiance of the nurse who bids him walk on cleaner ground, Byron plunged into the abominations of his Venetian depravity, to show his disdain of the English moralists who persisted in lecturing him for his evil behaviour, and bidding him mend his manners. After serious consideration few persons will think the biographer's suggestion worthy of the consideration bestowed upon it. It favours Moore's view that Byron laboured under a peculiar moral perversity, which made him often delight in slandering his own nature, and even incited him to fabricate evidence that he was a worse man than his enemies declared him. For the gratification of his 'morbid love of a bad reputation,' which Harness happily designated 'hypocrisy reversed,' Byron is said on good (though, by no means, the best) authority to have been in the practice of libelling himself in the Continental journals, in order that the libels on being reproduced in English newspapers should exasperate and deepen the abhorrence with which he was regarded by the rigid and censorious of his fellow-countrymen. It is scarcely credible that he was in *the habit* of doing so, though it is quite conceivable that he did so on a few rare occasions. The man, so perplexingly constituted as to delight in playing thus strangely on the credulity of his adversaries to their gratification and his own injury, must indeed have been enamoured of infamy and capable of going great lengths in speech and writing for the delectation of so singular a sense of humour. One would hesitate to assign any limit to his faculty of fibbing for so dismal an object,—to name any falsehood he would *not* have told in the pursuit of so eccentric an



amusement. There is, however, a wide difference between 'bammer' credulous gossipmongers with monstrous *words* and 'bammer' them with monstrous *deeds*. Trained in the dangerous school of humourists to which reference has been made in a previous chapter,—the school in which Byron was himself trained,—a man with a morbid taste for maligning himself might hoax foolish people with hideous avowals of guilt, or with anonymous libels on his character, and yet be quite incapable of committing the wicked acts so charged upon himself. He might even accuse himself of murder to shock people sufficiently simple to believe him, and yet be guiltless of the crime and have not the slightest propensity to commit it. At the instigation of perverse humour Byron might have been mad enough to do such a thing. Moore, however, would have his readers believe something far harder to believe;—that, instead of charging himself with repulsive dissoluteness for the pleasure of laughing in his sleeve at the dupes of his trickery, he actually committed heinous immoralities, to put it beyond the doubt alike of his friends and his foes that he was a prodigious profligate. Had he been actuated in his Venetian excesses by the mere desire to shock social opinion, without having a genuine inclination for the excesses themselves, he could and would have achieved his purpose by the artifices of self-slander, in which he was so expert. The unreasonableness of Moore's hypothesis appears also in the fact that much of the poet's Venetian immorality, consisting of matters not at all likely to be known in England, was not adapted to the end he is supposed to have had in view.

To account for the poet's depravation, that became deeper and more apparent as the weeks followed one another from the commencement of his residence in Venice till the spring of 1819, readers must put aside Moore's suggestion, and think how social humiliation, renewal of disappointment, chagrin at the failure of his overtures for reconciliation with his wife, a growing sense of desolation and ignominy, and all the embittering consequences of his extrusion from English society would be likely to affect the temper and spirits, and through them the taste, of a man so proud and sensitive, so selfish and volatile, and so utterly devoid of stoical hardness. Though beneficial to his health and spirits, his residence in Switzerland was not calculated to improve his moral tone or raise him in his own respect. The libertine, who had amused himself with Claire whilst nursing hopes of reunion with his wife, can scarcely have crossed the Alps with an untroubled conscience. Some compunction for his treatment of the foolish girl (a gentlewoman by culture), whom he had discarded, must surely have mingled with his fierce resentment



against the wife who had discarded him. It is conceivable that secret uneasiness, arising from his reflections on his recent relations with Claire, may have disposed him to take for his next mistress a woman with whom he should be able to part with a lighter heart. Though he had talked of his voyage from Dover to Ostend as a voyage to exile, he crossed the water with a hidden confidence of being back again in England in a few months; but the subsequent rebuff from Lady Byron had shaken the confidence rudely, without altogether extinguishing it. With the Shelleys by his side in Switzerland, with Hobhouse for his companion in the Bernese Oberland and in Italy, the exile endured none of the pains and inconveniences of expatriation. But after settling at Venice he tasted the bitterness of banishment. When the exhausting dissipations of the carnival and the sharp attack of malarial fever had reduced him to a condition, in which so sensitive and companionable a being needed the stimulant of congenial and sympathetic society for the restoration of his nervous tone, he had for his closest, indeed his sole, familiar, the woman of alien race and tongue, of breeding and temper in no degree superior to her plebeian birth and station, whose lowering influence disposed him to prefer the rude comeliness and ruder badinage of sempstresses and courtesans to the finer beauty and humour of gentlewomen. As soon as it lost the charm of novelty, Venetian society ceased to amuse him. Petty and monotonous, it wanted the brilliance and diversity of Mayfair. Madame Albrizzi's receptions and Madame Benzon's reunions afforded him none of the extravagant idolatry that had fed his vanity at Melbourne House and in Lady Jersey's drawing-rooms. Of the noble Venetians who stared at him, on being informed that he was an illustrious English noble, scarcely one in ten knew the names of his principal poems, scarcely one in a hundred had read fifty stanzas of 'Childe Harold.' With the men he never became popular; and for several weeks the complaisances of the women were more fruitful of embarrassment than of gratification to the poet who, from want of familiarity with their musical language, could not apprehend the subtleties of their pretty speeches. On becoming a master of their tongue, the man, who had lived with the brightest wits and ripest scholars of his native country, discovered the shallowness and amazing ignorance of the pedants and pretenders who passed for men of learning at the assemblies of the two Italian countesses. Withdrawing disdainfully from the learned people, who needed his assurance that George Washington was not killed in a duel by Edmund Burke, Byron thought it better to chatter with Marianna Segati about her new clothes, than to converse gravely

with Madame Albrizzi about her 'Portraits' of Famous Personages and her 'Essays' on the Works of Canova. Suffering from the want of congenial society, he longed for the voices of his friends in England. Feeling their absence acutely, he chafed and fretted at the fewness and brevity of their letters. 'Business,' he writes angrily to Murray (June 18, 1818), 'and the utter and inexplicable silence of all my correspondents renders me impatient and troublesome . . . . When I tell you that I have not heard a word from England since very early in May, I have made the eulogium of my friends, or the persons who call themselves so, since I have written so often and in the greatest anxiety. Thank God, the longer I am absent, the less cause I see for regretting the country or its living contents.'

A month later (July 17, 1818), he exclaims passionately to the same correspondent, in a postscript to one of the several sharp, scolding, insolent letters written by him in this period of his exile, 'I have written some very savage letters to Mr. Hobhouse, Kinnaird, to you, and to Hanson, because the silence of so long a time made me tear off my remaining rags of patience.' Yearning for his friends he had no longer the heart to go—or even to think of going to them. On January 28, 1817, he wrote to Moore, 'I think of being in England in the spring;' in March 1818, whilst declaring his intention of spending the remainder of his life in Venice, he meditated visiting England for the transaction of business; but in June 1818, the thought of returning to the country of his birth had become so distasteful to him that he resented wrathfully the attempts that were being made to lure him back to London. 'Hobhouse's wish is, if possible,' he writes to Murray on June 18, 1818, 'to force me back to England; he will not succeed; and if he did, I would not stay. I hate the country and like this; and all foolish opposition, of course, merely adds to the feeling.'

The misprints in his works published in London caused him to fret and fume at the carelessness of the correctors for the press. Calling Murray's attention to two slips that exposed him to adverse criticism at the time, and have perplexed many a reader of the 4th Canto of 'Childe Harold,' he wrote on 24th September, 1818, from Venice, "And thou, who never yet of human wrong *left* the unbalanced scale, great Nemesis!" and not *lost*, which is nonsense, and what losing an unbalanced scale means, I know not; but *leaving* an unbalanced scale, or a scale unbalanced, is intelligible. What does "Thy waters *wasted* them" mean (in the Canto)? *That is not me.* Consult the MS. *always*.

The anguish of home sickness, the plaintive cry of the exile,



ping for the friends and scenes he dares not revisit, are audible in the poet's alternately petulant and passionate avowals of hatred of the land, whither he would have sped on quick wings, had it not been for the depressing and exasperating conviction that to show his face in London without his wife's invitation would be to expose himself to a renewal of the ignominy of being silently cut. His vanity was to think himself a citizen of the world; but no Englishman was more disqualified for the character. Whilst his memory, imagination, and sensibility prevented him from surviving the forces of youthful attachments, his peculiar vein of selfishness disposed him to brood angrily over the griefs of wounded pride and torn affections. So constituted it is not wonderful that he sunk into the mire of sensual grossness. Humiliation, shame, keen sense of injury, remorseful anger, and incessant fury of heart and brain were the forces that disposed Byron to depraving enjoyments, and after breaking down the safeguards of natural delicacy and artificial refinement drove him to deaden the tortures of indignation and despair with the dull pleasures of sordid dissipation.

Some of his excesses were notorious; others were known only to persons who, like Fletcher and Hoppner, had exceptional opportunities for observing his downward course. His harem on the Grand Canal, to which he gathered frail women from the homes of artisans and the cabins of suburban peasants, was fruitful of scandals, that coming to the ears of English tourists from the gossip of gondoliers, were reported with wild exaggerations on the banks of the Thames. Little or nothing, however, was heard in England of the degree to which the poet now succumbed to the appetites of the glutton and the sot. Never so severely abstemious in drinking as in eating, and since the commencement of his domestic troubles notably less cautious with the bottle, Byron now for a short time became a large and habitual consumer of alcohol, preferring spirits to wine, possibly as the cheaper as well as the quicker instrument of intoxication; for in the poet, who had been so free-handed and even wasteful of his pecuniary resources up to the time of his withdrawal from England, the desire of earning as much money as possible was soon associated with a propensity to the 'good old gentlemanly vice' of avarice. At the same time he ate whenever he was hungry, often taking food to gratify a craving that was more due to dyspepsia than need of nutriment.

It is remarkable that this indulgence of the senses neither clouded nor weakened the intellect of the man, who had formerly



been encouraged in abstinence by the mental clearness and activity which it afforded him. On the contrary, inconsiderate observers might have inferred from the development and fecundity of his genius throughout this period of moral declension that his mind was fortified and quickened by the excesses of his body. Charmed and delighted by the grace and exuberant energy of his friend's intellect at Geneva, Shelley was far more deeply impressed by its grandeur and subtlety two years later in Italy; and had he returned to Venice, when Byron was at the lowest depth of his depravation, the younger poet would have had even stronger reasons for styling Count Maddalo 'a person of consummate genius' with 'powers incomparably greater than those of other men.' To account for this expansion of Byron's faculties under conditions that might have been expected to dwarf and blight them, readers must remember that he was precisely at the age when genius hastens to maturity; that he had for years been gathering the wealth of thought and feeling, which he now poured upon his readers with brilliant prodigality; and that by stimulating his combativeness the circumstances, under which he revealed his full mental magnitude, and spoke, now to the world's amazement and now to its delight, from the depths of his soul's anguish and daring, were conducive to intellectual energy in proportion as they were destructive of his happiness and hurtful to his nature. But though the excesses spared his mind, Byron suffered in his body a heavy punishment for fleshly sins. Drinking freely he paid the usual penalties of sottishness. In the increasing violence of his temper (ever too fervid), in the alteration of his voice (once so clear and musical that children turned from their play for the delight of listening to it), and in his penmanship (always indicative of irritability, and now growing so illegible that it troubled the best compositors to decipher it) there were signs of the nervous distress occasioned by drinking. At the same time eating freely (perhaps without taking more food than most men require for their sustenance) he became gross in form and visage,—reassuming in the course of a few months the unwieldy corpulence and facial obesity that had caused him so much inconvenience and disgust at Cambridge. In some respects the poet's Venetian fatness was more disfiguring than the grossness that afflicted him at manhood's threshold. At the university he may have been an inch or two larger round the waist, his cheeks may have been fuller and his jawl bigger, but they had the smoothness and firmness of youth, and a complexion no less clear than pale. At Venice, on the contrary, his flesh was pasty and flaccid, and the pallor of his

countenance had the faint yellow tinge and uncleanly hue of the sufferer from a sluggish liver. Working at night and far into the morning, when he had dismissed the sharers of his unedifying pleasures, the poet seldom went to rest till he was so fatigued that sleep came quickly to his pillow. But the slumber, wooed thus violently, seldom lasted for an hour before he returned to consciousness,—sometimes to roll in agony through long assaults of acute dyspepsia ; more often to lie in melancholy moodiness or endure the torture of afflicting hallucinations. Sufficiently severe to overcome the fortitude of the most stoical sufferer, to Byron, with a nervous idiosyncrasy that rendered him peculiarly sensitive and impatient of physical discomfort, the pain of these spasmodic seizures was almost maddening torment. The mental anguish that came to him from cruel dreams was no less acute. Even when he was so fortunate as to have several hours of unbroken and healthy sleep, he gained no sense of refreshment from the long repose, and left his couch to pass almost as many hours in despondency.

It was, perhaps, to his advantage that, when he had persisted for successive months in this hurtful way of living, the failure of his digestion compelled him to return to a sparing diet. Rebellious against the tyrant, who had shown so little consideration for its weakness and irritability, his stomach rejected the nutriment it could no longer assimilate. From the middle to the end of January 1819, his diet consisted chiefly of 'scampi,'—the most indigestible kind of fish taken in the Adriatic. In February, after losing his relish for this unwholesome species of marine food, he lived like hibernating animals and shipwrecked seamen on the tissues of his own body, losing in a few weeks much of the corpulence, which had been growing upon him through twice as many months, no less to his inconvenience than his disfigurement. For awhile he could drink grog without discomfort and even with gratification, when to eat a morsel of the tenderest meat or finest bread or a piece of biscuit was to provoke nausea, retching, and violent cramp of the body. Soon he suffered no less severely from a small glass of spirit-and-water than from a spoonful of macaroni. Taking probably the best course for its cure, this extreme sickness of the stomach 'clapt the muzzle on his jaws' (his own term) and made him abstemious, in spite of himself. That he continued to work with brain and pen, and produced some of his brightest letters and most strenuous verse during such illness, was not the least remarkable feature of his case. Contrasting strangely and alarmingly with the body's decay, the mind's restless vigour showed less like a sign of recuperative energy, than the action of a soul wilfully



destroying its own frail tenement. For several days the invalid could neither take his customary exercise on the Lido, nor even descend to his gondola. Whilst his knees trembled beneath the diminished weight of his shrunken body, his singularly small and delicate hands grew bloodlessly wan and transparent, like the hands of a girl dying of consumption. His auburn tresses became visibly thinner, whilst the still abundant hair displayed a whitened thread in almost every curl. In his wakeful hours, when the mind was not occupied with its literary enterprises, anxiety was discernible in the resoluteness of his blue eyes, whilst his countenance wore the peculiar look of apprehension and distress, that so often betrays a sick man's sense of growing danger.

After sinking to a condition, when the malaria of the canals or a whiff of poison from a foul drain might have sent him in a trice on his last voyage to the Lido, Byron surprised the few affectionate observers of his state with a recovery of power that disposed them to hopefulness. Getting the better of its irritability, the stomach no longer rejected the food which the invalid ventured to take at the suggestion of reviving appetite; and this change was the more reassuring as the desire for the small quantity of substantial nutriment was accompanied by no craving for ardent drink. Repose and wholesome diet having resulted in a renewal of physical vigour, the Hoppners observed with satisfaction that the patient showed no inclination to repeat the vicious extravagances that had been even more hurtful to his reputation than his health. Though he had persisted in the diversions of sordid licentiousness almost to the hour of his abject prostration, his illness had been preceded by indications of remorseful disgust at his own excesses. More than once, in a sudden revulsion of feeling, he had hastened abruptly from his noisy palace to the tranquil water, and escaping from the lewd riot of an infamous company had passed the remainder of the night in his gondola. Without venturing to play the part of Mentor to a man, so greatly his superior in rank and social eminence, and somewhat his superior in age, Hoppner had on several occasions shown his regret at the poet's way of living, and at least on one occasion had told him frankly that he was rendering himself ridiculous and contemptible to the Venetian coteries, less tolerant of *grossièreté* than of profligacy. It is not wonderful, therefore, that during his convalescence Byron forbore to gather about him the women who, probably in obedience to orders delivered to them by Fletcher, had ceased to visit the Palazzo for several weeks. Surprise may however have qualified the Consul-General's gratification, when on the restora-



tion of his health Byron, instead of relapsing to his former associates and immoralities, displayed a wholesome preference for the 'circles,' whose admiration for *the poet* had of late been associated with disdain for the *mauvais sujet*. In thus returning to the coteries, whose disfavour had been provoked by his sordid dissoluteness, it is conceivable that he was actuated by pique as well as prudence. Had Madame Benzoni's 'set' and Madame Albrizzi's friends regarded his depravation as an interesting example of the waywardness of genius, or spoken of its excesses with dismay and curiosity instead of ridicule and simple repulsion, the poet's morbid love of evil fame might have disposed him to return to the courses, that made him a fascinating enigma of naughtiness to perplexed and slightly horrified worshippers. On hearing from Hoppner that, instead of being puzzled or inordinately scandalised by his vicious irregularities, the Venetians attributed them contemptuously to a natural taste for low life and low living, it was consistent with his vanity and love of approbation to think it incumbent on his honour to convince the coteries that as a man of society no less than as a poet he had surrendered none of his titles to their homage.

Anyhow he returned to the circles, that had seldom seen him during the previous twelve months, and was fast reinstating himself in the good graces of the amiable Venetians, when (April 6, 1819) he wrote to Murray, 'You ask about my health: about the beginning of the year I was in a state of great exhaustion, attended by such debility of stomach that nothing remained upon it; and I was obliged to reform my "way of life," which was conducting me from the "yellow leaf" to the ground, with all deliberate speed. I am better in health and morals.' Of the improvement of his health, sufficient evidence is afforded by his passion for Teresa Gamba Guiccioli, already in the first and sweetest of its tumultuous agitations. Of the improvement of his morals it is enough to say, that having survived his depraving *penchant* for the wives of Venetian tradesmen and mechanics, he was doing all in his power to make this Countess of sixteen years,—this bride of seven months' standing—a faithless wife.

## CHAPTER XX.

## TERESA GAMBA GUICCIOLI.

Byron's Regard for Teresa—Her Childhood and Beauty—Byron's First Introduction to her—Their Friendship at Venice—Teresa's Homeward Journey—'A Stranger loves the Lady of the Land'—Byron at Ravenna—Student of Medicine—Byron at Bologna—Mrs. Vavassour and Allegra—The Elopement (?)—Teresa at La Mira—Sensation in Venice—Count Guiccioli seeks Compensation—Teresa returns to her Husband—Byron's Preparations for returning to England—Invitation to Ravenna—The Poet 'At Home' in the Palazzo Guiccioli.

THE Marquise de Boissy having passed from the scene of her latest triumphs, the biographer may speak of her beauty, disposition, and mental endowments with a freedom that would violate the laws of gallantry and kindness, were she still alive. The same freedom may be exercised in respect to her relation to Byron, and the feelings he entertained for her during the last five years of his existence. More often her enemy, Death sometimes comes to the aid of Truth; and now that Death has removed the reasons for forbearance, it is well for Truth to record that the lady's amiability was most apparent in an imperfect submissiveness to the poet's caprices, that she was more indebted to education than natural alertness for her intellectual attainments, and that her personal attractions were by no means of the highest order. Truth also should put it on the record of questions closed to further controversy, that, whilst Madame Guiccioli's relation to Byron was far from being so commendable as numerous writers have represented, there is no sufficient ground for thinking that Byron ever regarded her as more than an extremely eligible 'mistress,' or that he would at any point of their intercourse have made her his wife, had circumstances permitted him to do so.

Moore, indeed, would have his readers believe that the poet loved the Italian Countess, and with the single exception of Mary Chaworth never *really* loved any other woman in his whole life. But Moore, an unreliable guide on other matters, is a misleading informant on questions touching his friend's relations with women—and especially so on questions touching his relations with Teresa Guiccioli. Hoppner—a far better authority than the Irishman on the affair under consideration (in truth the only one of the poet's English friends at all qualified to speak from his own knowledge positively on the nature of Byron's regard for the Contessa at the beginning of their liaison)—wrote

to the 'Athenæum' in May 1869, 'It was pretty evident to me that he at first cared little for her, however much his vanity may have been flattered on seeing the impression he had made on a young lady of rank in society so different from the other women he had known since his arrival in Venice; and it depended on the toss of a halfpenny whether he would follow her to Ravenna or return to England.' Byron had no more intimate friend than Consul-General Hoppner in 1819. Writing to him freely from Ravenna and Bologna, he spoke to him no less freely at Venice respecting the Contessa and his intercourse with the lady. Hoppner knew precisely how the liaison in its earlier stages affected his friend; and he had good reason for holding in 1819 the opinion he expressed in the 'Athenæum' half-a-century later. In his communications to the Consul-General on matters about which he was far too communicative even to so familiar an associate, the poet used language which puts it beyond question that even in the most romantic season of his attachment to the lady he regarded her only as a toy of the moment. And it seriously diminishes the confidence, which would otherwise have been due to the biographer's statements, that Moore was aware of the matters which demonstrate so clearly the nature of Byron's regard for the Countess. Moore is not to be blamed for omitting from his work facts that were unfit for general circulation; but he was guilty of something worse than disingenuousness in gushing about the fervour and sincerity of his friend's affection for Teresa, after giving consideration to circumstances he could not publish.

The daughter of a poor Romagnese noble of reduced fortunes, Teresa Gamba was born in the third year of the present century; her age (about which Moore errs by a year) being accurately given in the following words of the English note Byron wrote at Bologna (August 25, 1819) in her copy of 'Corinne.'—'My destiny rests with you, and you are a woman, seventeen years of age, and two out of a convent.' Brought from the convent into society when she had completed her fifteenth year, this girl of an ancient and impoverished house was offered in the usual way in the marriage-market of Ravenna when, after hanging on her parents' hands for rather more than twelve months, she was bought by a man, old enough to be her grandfather, but still young enough to desire a third wife;—the Count Guiccioli, a person of some culture, good estate and sordid nature, who had in his earlier time figured as a patron of the drama, and co-operated with Alfieri for the establishment of a National Theatre. On passing (*ætat.* sixteen) into the possession of a husband (*ætat.* sixty), whose revenue of some ten or twelve English



thousands a-year made him one of the wealthiest nobles of Romagna, Teresa was fairly read in the poets of her own country, and had some knowledge of French literature,—attainments which may have commended her to the favour of her lord, in whom a generous concern for letters was united with a stronger respect for money. She was also fortunate in the personal endowments most likely to quicken the pulses of an aged breast. Too short (especially in the legs) for elegance, and too massive everywhere for grace, she possessed in the contour of her cheeks and lower jaw, in her large neck, fair shoulders, white bosom, and showy arms, the proportions and development of an almost matronly attractiveness. But if she was deficient in the girlish shapeliness, that appears so admirable to youthful beholders, Teresa, in the freshness of her clear and childish complexion, and the naïve cheeriness of a countenance alike prodigal of smiles and blushes, possessed the charms that are peculiarly delightful to veterans in pleasure. She had other attractions,—in her large blue eyes (*not* dark, as that perplexing Tom Medwin declares), veiled with singularly long brown lashes, ample white eye-lids, high eye-brows (remarkable for their fine arches pencilled with umber), a dainty pair of lips, wickedly pretty teeth, a coy chin, and an almost too high forehead surmounted by the yellow hair, fine as cobweb and glossy as satin, that fell in a rich profusion of unconstrained curls to her shoulders. As Tom Medwin (the perplexing) insists that the lady's tresses were of 'the darkest auburn,' it is well for the writer of the present page to declare no less stoutly from his own personal knowledge and nice examination of the hair that the curls were yellow. Differing from Lady Caroline's fawn-flaxen hair in being of a deeper and unqualified yellow, Teresa Guiccioli's hair was so absolutely golden, that if a guinea-golden fillet of the deepest yellowness, ever seen in gold, had been put about her head, the tresses and the ornament would have been found of precisely the same hue and quality of colour. To her credit, also, be it said that, if her speech at times betrayed her Romagnese origin, her voice and way of using it were winningly gentle; and the prevailing air of her intelligent face was peculiarly expressive of simplicity, good humour and good breeding. In brief, with her happy face, delicate colour, cordial voice and amplitude of snowy developments, this broad-breasted, full-waisted, 'chumpy' girl-countess was precisely the creature of obvious flesh and blood to win the enthusiastic admiration of an elderly gentleman, requiring in his mistress a piquant combination of the freshness of 'sweet seventeen' with the plenitude of 'forty.' She was also precisely the being to win the approval

of the English poet who, on escaping from Lady Caroline's persecutions, never regarded mere elegance as a sufficient compensation for want of substance in the goddesses of human kind.

Three days after her marriage in the autumn of 1818, Teresa Guiccioli in all her bridal finery appeared at one of Madame Albrizzi's receptions, when Byron was present; but the poet was not introduced to the young Countess till the April of the ensuing year, when they exchanged words for the first time at one of the Countess Benzoni's parties. With Byron, to see a creature so perfectly to his material taste in affairs of feminine loveliness was to evince the delight with which she inspired him; to speak with her was in his case to resolve he would enslave her even as she had enslaved him. The will and the deed went hand in hand, when Byron entertained such a purpose. No less fleet than fierce, his 'passions' had taught him to strike whilst the passion was hot, so that the sentiment might at least survive the first opportunity for its triumph. In the present case there was especial need for alacrity, as the Countess and her husband (whom she never ventured to address by a more familiar title than 'Signor') were to leave Venice a fortnight hence. The necessity for speed did not however betray Byron into the haste that is speed's proverbial enemy. Instead of frightening the young bride with a premature avowal of his desire, or entertaining her with the common-place flatteries which to a novice or blunderer in the gay art of libertinism would have appeared the best prelude to the revelation of his 'passion' on a later day, Byron, playing his old London game, spoke to her of her wholesome interests and 'simple matters of the house,'—of Ravenna and domestic pleasures, of Dante's tomb and poetry, of her studies and the literature of her nation. Talking as though he felt or would fain feel for her as a brother, he led her to wish she were his sister. His voice (that had recovered the clearness and music which left it for a while in the days of his not distant depravity) was gentle and tender. Without ceasing to be deferential it grew cooingly confidential. The Count (himself a lettered noble) may well have been gratified by the great poet's homage to his girlish wife,—by the attention with which he listened to her remarks on the famous writers of Italy. On the morrow the poet and Countess met as brother and sister. On several successive days they met on the same footing, each interview making them more communicative to and trustful in one another. From Teresa's lips the poet heard stories of the convent in which she had been educated, of the gaieties of the not too festive Ravenna which he promised to visit for the sake of



drawing inspiration from Dante's tomb, and of the way in which she had been wooed and won by a husband so much her senior. From the poet's lips Teresa received the story of his wayward youth, sudden celebrity, and doleful separation from his darling Ada,—a story of many chapters that made the listener laugh at his comical adventures, exult in his triumphs, weep over his sorrows. Playing the part of her father-confessor in brotherly fashion, Byron questioned the plump little Countess about her knowledge of society, her tastes in music and literature, her liking for horse exercise, her domestic duties. The man was happy and confident; the girl unutterably happy and fearful. Platonic love passes quick to warmer feeling in cold and cloudy England;—quicker, far quicker in the warm and sunny South. Holding to their plans, the Count and Countess Guiccioli left Venice for Ravenna in the middle of April; but before the husband and wife started for Ravenna, Byron and Teresa had ceased to be brother and sister. He had vowed to be faithful to her for ever: she had given him the strongest proof of her responsiveness to his passion.

Moore knew this was the course of his friend's and the Countess's mutual passion, and yet he speaks of her quickness in yielding to her suitor's entreaties, as though an Englishwoman would have resisted them only a few days longer. 'The young Italian,' says Moore, 'found herself suddenly inspired with a passion, of which, till that moment, her mind could not have formed the least idea:—she had thought of love but as an amusement, and now became its slave. If at the outset, too, less slow to be won than an Englishwoman, no sooner did she begin to understand the full despotism of the passion than her heart shrunk from it as something terrible, and she would have escaped, but the chain was already around her!' Less slow than an Englishwoman! When and where did the Contessa give a sign of shrinking from the 'something terrible'? In the eagerness of her acquiescence she was so heedless of the feminine proprieties as to omit the customary display of reluctance. Instead of struggling against the chain, she clutched and hugged it, in the pride and delight of novelty. On starting for Ravenna a faithless wife, this bride of seven months' standing had not known Byron a full fortnight. When a lady flies to a suitor's arms with such generous promptitude, it is unhandsome to speak of her alacrity as comparable with northern slowness 'at the outset.'

Parting from her lover in grief, the Countess was so overpowered by her feelings as to lose her consciousness thrice, during the first day's journey. At each of her several resting-



places between Venice and Ravenna she wrote to Byron, entreating him to follow her quickly, declaring that without him she should go speedily to her grave, promising him all the love, honour, and obedience she had so recently promised her husband. To make herself less unworthy of his regard, to make herself a better woman, she would observe all his orders for the amendment of her ways, the improvement of her nature, the exaltation of her spirit. 'In accordance with his advice she would avoid all general society, and devote herself to reading, music, domestic cares, riding on horseback.' To please him should henceforth be her first object and chief delight. She did not reach Ravenna without illness, more serious than fainting-fits, induced by passionate yearning for her lover. On arriving at the Palazzo Guiccioli in her native city she was in the condition, styled 'half-dead' by romantic biographers and novelists, given to write rhapsodical nonsense. There is no evidence that she did *not* really faint away and lie up from dangerous illness on the road, and come to her Ravennese palace in semi-deadness. No injustice, however, is done the lady by a suggestion that the fainting-fits, and dangerous illness and semi-deadness may have been mere semblances of nervous trouble for her husband's needful discipline,—or may even have resembled the standing armies of the second French Empire in being less affairs of reality than of paper. The women of England are of course incapable of such artifice; but this Italian Countess was capable of writing, for her lover's edification, more vehemently of her piteous case than her actual experiences would warrant. The consumption, which seized her so opportunely in May and left her so conveniently in July, and harassed her worse than ever in September, was certainly more a thing of trick than truth. To induce the Count to welcome Byron to Ravenna, the Countess took to coughing and spitting blood. To cover her flight to Venice in Byron's company she contrived a pulmonary relapse, that required the treatment to be found only in so salubrious a city. The lady, who showed so singular an aptitude for shamming half-deadness and consumption, was ready to simulate death itself for a purpose. To be his companion for ever without incurring the infamy of elopement, she actually proposed to Byron that she should feign to be dead, and by means of a mock-sepulture pass to his possession through the grim gateway of an avoidable grave.

On receiving Teresa's account of the deplorable condition in which she arrived at Ravenna, together with her assurances that his presence could alone restore her to health and happiness, Byron made arrangements for visiting her in fulfilment of the

promise given her at Venice. On the 15th of May he was thinking of starting for Romagna in the following week. Circumstances, however, caused him to postpone the expedition till the 2nd of June, on which day he left his villa at La Mira and journeyed (*viâ* Padua, Ferrara, and Bologna) towards 'the lady of his love,' who had informed him that her relatives and friends were looking for his arrival amongst them. 'A journey in an Italian June,' he wrote to Hoppner from Padua, 'is a conscription; and if I was not the most constant of men, I should now be swimming from the Lido, instead of smoking in the dust of Padua.' On one of the banks of the Po, this most constant of men wrote the familiar verses so exquisitely eloquent of desire.

- 'River, that rollest by the ancient walls,  
Where dwells the lady of my love, when she  
Walks by thy brink, and there perchance recalls  
A faint and fleeting memory of me :
- 'What if thy deep and ample stream should be  
A mirror of my heart, where she may read  
The thousand thoughts I now betray to thee  
Wild as thy waves, and headlong as thy speed !
- 'What do I say ?—a mirror of my heart ?  
Are not thy waters sweeping, dark and strong ?  
Such as my feelings were and are, thou art ;  
And such as thou art were my passions long.
- 'Time may have somewhat tamed them,—not for ever ;  
Thou overflow'st thy banks, and not for aye  
Thy bosom overboils, congenial river !  
Thy floods subside, and mine have sunk away,
- 'But left long wrecks behind, and now again,  
Borne in our old unchang'd career, we move ;  
Thou tendest wildly onwards to the main,  
And I—to loving *one* I should not love.
- 'The current I behold will sweep beneath  
Her native walls and murmur at her feet ;  
Her eyes will look on thee, when she shall breathe  
The twilight air, unharm'd by summer's heat.
- 'She will look on thee—I have look'd on thee,  
Full of that thought ; and from that moment, ne'er  
Thy waters could I dream of, name, or see,  
Without the inseparable sigh for her !
- 'Her bright eyes will be imaged in thy stream,—  
Yes ! they will meet the wave I gaze on now ;  
Mine cannot witness, even in a dream,  
That happy wave repass me in its flow !
- 'The wave that bears my tears returns no more :  
Will she return by whom that wave shall sweep ?—  
Both tread thy banks, both wander on thy shore,  
I by thy source, she by the dark-blue deep.

- ‘ But that which keepeth us apart is not  
Distance, nor depth of wave, nor space of earth,  
But the distraction of a various lot,  
As various as the climates of our birth.
- ‘ A stranger loves the lady of the land,  
Born far beyond the mountains, but his blood  
Is all meridian, as if never fann’d  
By the black wind that chills the polar flood.
- ‘ My blood is all meridian ; were it not,  
I had not left my clime, nor should I be,  
In spite of tortures, ne’er to be forgot,  
A slave again of love,—at least of thee.
- ‘ ‘Tis vain to struggle—let me perish young—  
Live as I lived, and love as I have loved ;  
To dust if I return, from dust I sprung,  
And then, at least, my heart can ne’er be moved.’

On reaching Bologna where he hoped to find a letter from Teresa, giving him precise instructions for the regulation of his movements, he was sorely disappointed by the non-appearance of the looked-for epistle. The Countess’s illness (which changes in the course of twelve pages of Moore’s text from consumption to intermittent fever) certainly was no cause of her silence, which was wholly due to the inopportune absence of the confidential person, who had hitherto been the channel of her clandestine correspondence with the poet. In his chagrin at a circumstance, which may well have caused him perplexity and annoyance, Byron, after lingering two days at Bologna, had made up his mind to return at once to Venice, when suddenly relinquishing a purpose that would have exposed him to the ridicule of the Venetian coteries, he went on to Ravenna on the 8th of the month,—arriving there openly in the character of a famous poet, brought to the dull town by poetic interest in Dante. The stir and gossip of the tranquil little city, at the arrival of so celebrated a person, can be imagined. Byron, who found the people full of concern for the alarming illness of their young Countess, had scarcely settled himself in his hotel, when he received a visit of ceremony and friendship from the Count Guiccioli, who entreated him to come on the following day to the bedside of the dying lady. Of course the invitation was accepted with proper expressions of the poet’s astonishment and profound sorrow at the mournful intelligence, and also of the delight he had anticipated from a renewal of his intercourse with the Countess’s husband. Byron’s first visit to the dying Teresa in her own house having the desired effect on the patient, it was repeated daily with the Count’s approval.

For two months (from June 10 to August 9) the Palazzo



Guiccioli was the scene of a curious comedy of several acts and many exquisitely humorous scenes; the three actors of the droll drama being—the young Countess so near dying of consumption, intermittent fever *and* love; the poet acting as her physician; and the elderly count, less jealous than covetous, who instead of being moved by munificent impulses towards the physician, may be suspected of even then nursing a purpose of extorting a heavy fee from the successful doctor. Byron's published letters to Hoppner contain passages which, taken by themselves, exhibit him as the dupe of the lady's acting, but there is no lack of evidence that he was from the first fully alive to the nature of her malady and the best way of treating it. 'I greatly fear that the Guiccioli,' Byron wrote from Ravenna (July 2, 1819) to his friend at Venice, 'is going into a consumption, to which her constitution tends. Thus it is with everything and everybody for whom I feel anything like a real attachment:—"War, death, or discord, doth lay siege to them!" I never even could keep alive a dog that I liked or that liked me.' The sadness these mournful assurances occasioned the Consul-General was quickly mitigated by the reflection that the patient had the best physician for her case in close attendance upon her.

When Count Guiccioli shared their long interviews, the Countess languished into suffering and silence, and Byron spoke with bated breath, whilst his countenance wore the look of affectionate solemnity, befitting a chamber that might soon become the sanctuary of death. But the lady's spirits rallied, and Byron prattled away to her right merrily, as soon as the Count withdrew. To qualify him to act as her medical adviser, Byron applied himself to the study of medicine, and then, with modesty unusual in a novice of a difficult art, the amateur doctor wrote to Professor Aglietti for his opinion on the Countess's illness, and entreated the famous physician to hasten to him from Venice, even though he could only remain at Ravenna for twenty-four hours. 'For a long time,' Teresa Guiccioli wrote to Moore, 'he had perpetually medical books in his hands; and not trusting my physicians, he obtained permission from Count Guiccioli, to send for a very clever physician, a friend of his, in whom he placed great confidence.' Of course Aglietti took Byron's view of the case, and declared the poet was treating it in the very best way.

The Count's complaisance puzzled the poet, who wrote to Murray on June 29, 1819, 'Her husband is a very polite personage, but I wish he would not carry me out in his coach and six, like Whittington and his cat.' Nine days earlier the poet

had written to Hoppner, '*She* manages very well—but if I come away with a stiletto in my gizzard some fine afternoon, I shall not be astonished. I can't make *him* out at all—he visits me frequently, and takes me out (like Whittington, the Lord Mayor) in a coach and six horses. The fact appears to be, that he is completely *governed* by her—for that matter, so am I. The people here don't know what to make of us, as he had the character of jealousy with all his wives—this is the third.' Teresa was playing her game with cleverness highly creditable to her years; but her success was possibly due less to her cleverness than to her husband's crafty complicity in her proceedings. The probable explanation of this Italian nobleman's behaviour is that he winked at his bride's liaison with the English lord, because it offered him a brief respite from the humiliation of being compelled to allow his wife a permanent cavalier in attendance, and because he saw his way to making money out of the affair. Like Byron the Count loved money, and whilst capable of liberality and even profuseness in the expenses of ostentation, was vigilant against the inflammation of his weekly bills. Byron's notorious fickleness in gallantry rendered it improbable that he would wish to dangle at the Countess's skirt for many months. Under these circumstances the Count had good and substantial motives for conniving at a temporary and secret arrangement, which would postpone the demand for a permanent and open one. Anyhow the Count Guiccioli had no thought of thrusting a dagger between the ribs of his wife's admirer. Byron knew the Count better after knowing him four months longer.

On the approach of August 9, 1819,—the day appointed for the Count and Countess (the lady having by this time regained her usual good health) to migrate from their palace at Ravenna to their residence in Bologna,—Byron's apprehension of a grievously long severance from his mistress caused him to implore the lady to fly with him to some scene of perpetual happiness. Probably he was no more sincere in this entreaty, than he had been years since when in the postscript of the letter, which reiterated his refusal of the lady's prayer for immediate elopement, he declared his readiness to fly with Lady Caroline Lamb whither-soever and whenever she pleased. After living nearly three years in Italy he must have been aware, that though quicker than her sisters of the cold north to acquiesce in anything short of elopement for a lover's happiness, the Italian gentlewoman shrinks from the bare thought of scandalous *flight* from her husband even as an English gentlewoman shrinks from the bare imagination of the wickedness which in every land usually precedes

the act of desertion. Had he thought Teresa would have taken him at his word, the poet would perhaps have been less ready with his generous offer to cover her with infamy. It is enough that he made the offer, which plunging her into agitations of shame and terror, drew from her a passionate avowal that, though willing to gratify him in every other way, she could not take the step that clothing her with perpetual ignominy would place her, Countess though she was, in the herd of fallen women. On growing calmer, she made the strange offer already referred to. If the career of the Countess Guiccioli could be closed with honour, she would consent to any proposal, do anything he desired for his happiness. The woman, who had feigned consumption and half-death, was ready to feign death itself and be committed in shroud and coffin to the terrors of the charnel-house, in order to escape from the evidence of her identity with her husband's wife, and be able to devote herself wholly to her lover, without dishonouring the Guicciolis and the Gambas. As it was calculated to please his fancy and gratify his appetite for mysterious adventure and the terrors of romance, this project would have received more of his serious consideration, had Byron been desirous of taking the Countess on his hands for ever.

The Count's complaisance deferred for another ten days or so the event that might have been the occasion for so melodramatic a performance. It was arranged that Byron should follow to Bologna the dear mistress 'who had fed his heart upon smiles and wine for the last two months.' On the day after the Count and Countess re-entered their house at Bologna, Byron settled himself in the city's best inn. On the 21st of the month, when the Count and his bride went on a brief trip to some of their Romagnese properties, the poet was in truth (notwithstanding all that writers of romance allege to the contrary) by no means sorry to be relieved for a brief while of the society of the lady, whose demands on his chivalric consideration had not tended to strengthen him during the earlier weeks of his sojourn at Ravenna; the lady to whom he had addressed the dedicatory verses—chaste though cold as ice, exquisitely pure and elegant though absolutely artificial—of 'The Prophecy of Dante: '—

'Lady! if for the cold and cloudy clime  
Where I was born, but where I would not die,  
Of the great Poet-sire of Italy  
I dare to build the imitative rhyme,  
Harsh Runic copy of the South's sublime,  
THOU art the cause; and howsoever I  
Fall short of his immortal harmony,  
Thy gentle heart will pardon me the crime.



Thou, in the pride of Beauty and of Youth,  
 Spakest ; and for thee to speak and be obey'd  
 Are one ; but only in the sunny South  
 Such sounds are utter'd, and such charms display'd,  
 So sweet a language from so fair a mouth—  
 Ah ! to what effort would it not persuade ?'

The ten days, which he passed at Bologna in the society of the Guicciolis, had been days of nervous irritability and tempestuous agitation to Byron. There is abundant evidence in his letters that he was by turns hysterical, perverse, and passionate, —conditions of feeling for which his relations with Teresa and her husband were chiefly accountable, though other matters worried him. Chafing and fuming at the adverse criticisms on the two first cantos of 'Don Juan,' he returned to his old practice of brooding over his domestic troubles. On the twelfth evening of August he was sitting in the same box with the Countess Guiccioli, when he experienced during the performance of Alfieri's 'Myrrha,' just such an hysterical seizure as he had experienced four years since on seeing Kean's impersonation of 'Sir Giles Overreach ;' —an outbreak of emotion that was the more inconvenient, because it threw the young Countess into hysterics of another kind. On the morrow of this equally significant and vexatious exhibition of sensibility, Byron was writing in the old strain of morbid violence about Time the Avenger and the signal punishment meted out by stern justice to the atrocious Romilly. On the 22nd of the same month, in his exasperation at an attack on 'Don Juan' he is dashing off in hot haste and fury ('amidst a thousand vexations') the Wortley-Clutterbuck epistle of retaliation, which Murray had the good sense to withhold from publication, after printing it in pamphlet form. On the 24th inst. (three days after Teresa's departure with her husband) he writes to Murray, 'I wish I had been in better spirits ; but I am out of sorts, out of nerves, and now and then (I begin to fear) out of my senses. All this Italy has done for me, and not England. I defy all you, and your climate to boot, to make me mad. But if ever I do really become a bedlamite, and wear a strait waistcoat, let me be brought back among you ; your people will then be proper company.' Three days later (the 27th inst.) he has a violent quarrel with a lieutenant in the Papal troops, who has sold him an unsound horse,—a quarrel in which after railing at the offender with unmannerly and even maniacal violence he challenges him to fight then and there with pistol or sword under circumstances, which remind the reader of the ugly Byron-Chaworth duel. Two days later (the 29th instant) he precludes his blustering account to Murray of this rowdy

business with this noteworthy avowal, 'I have been in a rage these two days, and am still bilious therefrom.'

He was raging in this frantic style, now throwing pen-and-ink daggers at his enemies in England, and now flying like a mad bull-dog at enemies crossing his path at Bologna, during the very period in which he is declared by Moore to have surrendered himself to softening and subduing melancholy. The biographer assures us that it was the poet's fancy, during Madame Guiccioli's absence from Bologna, to go daily to her house at his usual hour of visiting her, and there, causing her apartments to be opened, to sit turning over her books, and writing in them. 'And here,' says the poetical describer of his friend's way of passing the days at Bologna during his mistress's tour about the country, 'with a heart softened and excited by the new feeling that had taken possession of him, he appears to have given himself up, during the interval of solitude, to a train of melancholy and impassioned thought, such as, for a time, brought back all the romance of his youthful days. That spring of natural tenderness within his soul, which neither the world's efforts nor his own had been able to chill or choke up, was now, with something of its first freshness, set flowing once more. He again knew what it was to love and be loved,—too late, it is true, for happiness, and too wrongly for peace, but with devotion enough, on the part of the woman, to satisfy even his thirst for affection, and with a sad earnestness, on his own, a foreboding fidelity, which made him cling but the more passionately to this attachment from feeling that it would be his last.' After turning over the books of the absent lady's apartments, the poet is described as descending to her garden, and passing hours in musing there. 'It was on an occasion of this kind, as he stood looking, in a state of unconscious reverie, into one of those fountains so common in the gardens of Italy, that there came suddenly into his mind such desolate fancies, such bodings of the misery he might bring on her he loved, by that doom which (as he has himself written) "makes it fatal to be loved," that, overwhelmed with his own thoughts, he burst into an agony of tears;—a flow of overwhelming emotion, so perfectly in accordance with all that is known of the poet's sensibility and hysterical diathesis, that one can readily accept to the very letter his account of the incident.

Whilst there is no evidence that Byron went *daily* in this manner to Teresa's deserted rooms, there is much evidence to discredit the allegation. It is highly improbable that he spent hours at a time in this fashion on the days when he was throwing from angry pen the Wortley-Clutterbuck epistle (that made

twenty-three pages of printed matter); when he was writing the alternately querulous and stormy letters to Murray; when he was in the fierceness of his wild fury against the military horse-sharper whom he challenged ('thief' though the fellow was) to fight a murderous duel. The truth is that he visited the silent chambers and garden of the fair Guiccioli—once and again; certainly twice; possibly oftener. Now, no less than in former times of emotional riot, his moods followed one another quickly. Passing in an hour from rage to love, he reverted in a trice from tenderness to wrath. In the gentler of his melancholy moods it pleased him to visit the fair garden of the Guiccioli, where he prattled with the gardeners and their women, and to saunter in the Campo Santo, where he made friends with the sexton and his pretty daughter. He certainly visited the Countess's room of study on the 23rd of August (the day *between* the subsidence of the Wortley-Clutterbuck fury and the wrath of the 'bedlamite letter' to Murray) when he penned the brief note, touching Madame de Stäel, on a leaf of Teresa's 'Fragmens des Pensées de Corinne.' He certainly went there again on the 25th of August (the earlier of the two days *between* the working-off of the 'bedlamite outbreak' and his wild row with the military horse-dealer), when he wrote on the last page of the 'Corinne' this remarkable epistle:

'MY DEAREST TERESA,—I have read this book in your garden;—my love, you were absent, or else I could not have read it. It is a favourite book of yours, and the writer was a favourite friend of mine. You will not understand these English words, and others will not understand them—which is the reason I have not scrawled them in Italian. But you will recognise the hand-writing of him who passionately loved you, and you will divine that, over a book which was yours, he could only think of love. In that word, beautiful in all languages, but most so in yours—*Amor mio*—is comprised my existence here and hereafter. I feel I exist here, and I fear I shall exist hereafter,—to *what* purpose you will decide; my destiny rests with you, and you are a woman, seventeen years of age, and two out of a convent. I wish you had stayed there, with all my heart—or, at least, that I had never met you in your married estate. But all this is too late, I love you, and you love me,—at least, you *say so*, and *act* as if you *did so*, which last is a great consolation in all events. But *I* more than love you, and cannot cease to love you.—Think of me, sometimes, when the Alps and the ocean divide us,—but they never will, unless you *wish* it.—BYRON.'

Characteristic of the man, in its tenderness of expression, its



dubitancy of feeling, its mistrust of his Teresa's affectionate assurances, this singular epistle—written in a tongue unknown to the lady—is a revelation of the wavering resoluteness and nervous incertitude of his purpose respecting the girl, who had inspired him with a passion far removed from love,—a passion less pure (for had he not worshipped Marianna Segati and Margarita Cogni?) but no less violent than his affection for Jane Clermont, a passion of whose grossness he made a shameless revelation to Hoppner. Hovering over a project, that offered him the pleasures sweetest to his senses, together with a triumph peculiarly fascinating to his vanity, the exile hesitated to commit himself to a course, that might postpone for years, possibly for ever, his return to the land for a sight of whose white cliffs he had long been pining. Hence the selection of the language in which he couched the proposal he could not deny himself the delight of framing. Too weak to resist stoutly, and too prudent to yield unreluctantly, he dallied with the tempter he dared not fight. Whilst thus nursing the design to purchase immediate gratification with future embarrassment, he looked with less of apprehension than of hope to the contingencies that, preserving him from its accomplishment, would place the Alps and the ocean between him and the object of his desire. The last words of the epistle are especially noteworthy for their indication of a resolve to return to England, should he be so fortunate as to encounter disappointment in Italy.—No wonder that, with irritating letters coming to him by every post from England, the man of fervid temper and quick sensibility, was unusually hysterical during his brief stay in the city where he eventually took the fatal step, for which weakness of will was even more accountable than power of passion.

At the time of starting for Romagna, Byron was entertaining a proposal, that might have preserved Allegra from death in childhood. An English lady, Mrs. Vavassour—a friend of the Hoppners, who delighted in children, without having a child of her own breast, on which to expend her strong maternal affectionateness,—had offered to adopt Jane Clermont's daughter, provided Byron would surrender all his paternal authority over the little girl, together with the claim to be even consulted respecting her education; and notwithstanding his promise to Claire before the birth of her offspring, the poet would have consented to Mrs. Vavassour's offer, had not she persisted in her demand for the total transference of his parental powers. Negotiation on this matter was still in progress between the lady and the Consul-General, when Mrs. Hoppner soon after Byron's arrival at Ravenna wished to be relieved of the child's

custody, at least for a time, in order that she might be free to accompany her husband on a trip to Switzerland. 'The best way,' Byron wrote from Ravenna to Hoppner on July 2, 1819, 'will be to leave Allegra with Antonio's spouse till I can decide something about her and myself—but I thought that you would have had an answer from Mrs. Vavassour. You have had bore enough with me and mine already.' The scheme having fallen through, in consequence of Mrs. Vavassour's refusal to abate anything of her demand for complete parental authority, Byron directed that the child and her nurse should join him at Bologna. 'I have,' he wrote to Murray on August 24, 1819, 'sent for my daughter from Venice.' It has been assumed that Byron sent for his child at this moment, merely for the diversion of her infantile presence and prattle. But whilst it is probable, it is also pleasant to believe, that before taking the meditated step which would place the Countess Guiccioli, at least, for a while, in the position of step-mother to the little girl, he wished to form an opinion from an observation of the lady's treatment of the child, whether Allegra would be likely to find a fond and devoted mother in Teresa. Anyhow, the child and her nurse were with Byron when the Guicciolis returned from their tour to Bologna.

Teresa's reappearance at Bologna was followed at no long interval by her husband's departure for Ravenna, whither he had been called by business; and during his absence, she went from Bologna to Venice in Byron's company. Of course the lady went thither to consult physicians about her health, which fluctuated in so singular a manner. Of course her journey to so salubrious a capital in her lover's society was no shameless flight; but a progress made with due regard to her dignity and honour. Is it not written in Moore's 'Life,' in the lady's own words, that the state of her health obliged her to go to Venice, and that she went thither so attended, with her husband's consent? On this point the lady is the only and by no means satisfactory witness. Had she been any other nobleman's wife, common sense would reject her statement as an impudent untruth; but as she was the wife of the Count Guiccioli, who had been conniving for weeks and months at her passion for the poet, it is conceivable that she had received her husband's permission to please herself when she started from Bologna on the 15th of September under circumstances so scandalous. At Bologna the Countess's departure with the English lord was regarded as an elopement; and all the notorious circumstances of the affair, together with a far larger number of imaginary particulars, speedily became the gossip of every palace and tavern of the city and surrounding country. 'When we arrived at Bologna,' Lady Morgan wrote from



Florence, October 25, 1819, to Lady Clark, 'they recommended us our apartments by telling us they were well-aired, as Lord Byron only left them the day before. You may suppose he came to Bologna to visit the learned body of that ancient university, or consult its famous library. Not a bit of it. He came to carry off a young lady.'

The invalid was, of course, too weak for rapid travel. Journeying leisurely she and Byron 'visited the Euganean Hills and Arquà, and wrote their names in a book which is presented to those who make this pilgrimage. But,' adds the Countess in her narrative of the proceedings, that placed her in the world's regard as Byron's mistress, 'I cannot linger over these recollections of happiness.' The invalid was a very happy invalid. On her arrival at Venice it was discovered by her physicians that she needed country air; the immediate consequence of the discovery being that Byron carried her off to his villa at La Mira, and introduced her to the same garden under whose trees he had sate with Marianna Segati, the same rooms in which Marianna had dwelt, the same bed in which the linen-draper's wife had slept. It does not seem to have occurred to the romantic believers in the chivalric purity of his devotion to Teresa Guiccioli, that they were speaking even worse of Byron than he was spoken of by his enemies, in declaring him capable of treating the object of his finest affection with such indignity. Association with Margarita Cogni and her crew had impregnated his nature with poisonous uncleanness, not to be speedily eliminated from his soul,—the poison that manifested itself in the disfigurements of 'Don Juan,' and rendered him capable of satirising his wife with satanic malice and absolutely appalling vulgarity. But it had not so far debased him, that he could have housed this seventeen-years young Italian Countess at La Mira of all places in the world, had she been (as Moore puts it) 'the only *real* love of his whole life, with one single exception,' or in fact anything more in his eyes than a highly eligible mistress.

Having brought her to La Mira, the poet lived there with her. 'Lord Byron,' says the Countess in her letter to Moore, 'having a villa at La Mira, gave it up to me, and came to reside there with me.' What a way of 'giving up' a country-house to a lady's use! The lady does not venture to assert, that in residing thus openly under her paramour's roof, she acted with her husband's sanction. Had she made the assertion one would be slow to declare it incredible. If the Count did not authorize the step, by which his young wife crossed the clear line that in Italy divided women of honour from women of abandonment, he condoned the offence in so remarkable a manner, that he may be



imagined capable of any extravagance of turpitude. She had been at La Mira for about a fortnight, living there notoriously, to the hot scandal of the ladies of Venice, who with all their tolerance of moral laxity retained their respect for certain rules of conventional decorum, and resented the violation of those rules with a warmth natural in persons capable of nearly every other kind of immorality, when she received a letter from her absent lord. A letter of scornful repudiation? of indignant expostulation? of stern command? No such thing! All the writer of the wheedling note required of her was that she should induce Lord Byron to *lend* her husband 1000*l.*! This was the game of this wealthy and long-descended noble! Instead of thirsting for the blood of his wife's betrayer, he only hungered for a little of his money?—of course, on loan, at five per cent.!' 'Restoration or a thousand pounds!' was the demand of this Italian Count who in his earlier time had earned a reputation for being a jealous husband; and instead of making the demand directly and without subterfuge, he wished to use his wife as an instrument for screwing the money, by way of a loan, out of her paramour. If Byron had misconceived the spirit of Teresa's husband, Count Guiccioli had been no less mistaken in his estimate of the disposition of her lover. No man was more averse than the poet of 1819 to parting with so large a sum as 1000*l.* on insufficient grounds. Though Moore and Mr. Alexander Scott urged their friend to pay the 1000*l.* without demur or any show of unwillingness, and to make the payment an occasion for returning the lady to her lawful owner, the poet (who had no intention in October 1819 that his liaison with the Contessa should be a long affair) declined to act on their counsel, and declared with a knowing nod of the head that he would 'save the lady and the money too.'

The Countess had been some days at La Mira, when Moore, coming to the villa in the afternoon of the 8th of October (for the brief sojourn at Venice that was the biographer's only occasion of personal intercourse with his friend, after his withdrawal from England) was surprised by the change in the poet's countenance that, having lost much of its earlier refinement by the enlargement of the features, was not improved by the whiskers, which he had recently adopted, to escape the imputation of having the '*faccia di musico!*' 'He had,' says Moore, 'grown fatter both in person and face, and the latter had suffered most by the change.' Though the visit was over in a few days, Moore remained at Venice long enough to discover how greatly Byron had shocked Venetian sentiment by withdrawing his 'Amica' from her husband's protection, and living with her

under the same roof. Whilst Madame Benzoni's friends expressed themselves freely on this painful subject in the hearing of the Irish poet, the lady herself ventured to entreat him to use his influence with his friend, for the abatement of so extraordinary a scandal. 'You must really scold your friend,' said the lady,—adding with more complaisance than sincerity, 'Till this unfortunate affair he behaved himself *so well!*' Moore's stay at Venice closed with the dinner at the La Mira villa, immediately before which repast he received from Byron's own hands the manuscript of 'The Memoirs,' respecting whose destruction something will be said in an ensuing chapter. On giving his friend the present, that in the course of a few years became the subject of so much angry discussion, Byron remarked, 'It is not a thing that can be published during my lifetime, but you can have it, if you like. There, do whatever you please with it.'

Byron's natural reluctance to part with 1000*l.* caused the Count Guiccioli to think it full time for Teresa to return to his protection. At the same time Venetian 'society' was evincing its disapproval of Teresa's behaviour in ways that made Byron feel it would be well for him to return her to the Count on the earliest occasion. Fuming with rage at the slights and censorious expostulations by which the ladies of Venice manifested their displeasure at her misbehaviour, Byron saw he had better escape from a position of extreme discredit and numerous embarrassments. Aware at Bologna that the enterprise, which occasioned him so much agitation, might have disastrous consequences, he at the same time cherished the hope of being able to extricate himself at an early date from the difficulties that would result from the escapade. In less than a month it was obvious to him that he could not withdraw too soon from an entanglement that was already giving him more annoyance than pleasure. All that he ventured to object to the advice given him by Moore and Alexander Scott in the second week of October was that he could not consent to pay so heavily for his frolic.

In the first week of the ensuing month (November), when the Count Guiccioli appeared in Venice to reclaim his erring wife, it is conceivable that he was disappointed by the poet's readiness to acquiesce in his wishes on every point, with the exception of the pecuniary question. Receiving Teresa's husband (the Count) precisely as he had a year earlier received Margarita Cogni's husband (the baker), Byron said, 'You wish for Madame; then by all means take her.' Coming to Venice with a paper of conditions for his wife's acceptance in his



pocket (the principal condition being that she should desist from intercourse of every kind with her lover; the minor conditions having reference to comparatively trivial matters that set Byron laughing), the Count had stormy interviews and hard battles with Teresa, who would have risen against her owner in unqualified mutiny and sent him back to Ravenna with a flea in his ear, had her lover encouraged her rebellious spirit with so much as a single approving nod or a single sympathetic glance. Byron's tameness at her moment of trial would have been more painful to Teresa, and might even have inspired her with feelings of resentment, had he not been suffering from the prostration of a sharp attack of tertian fever:—yet another assault by the enemy that eventually killed him. With encouragement from her lover, who indeed advised her to be a sensible creature and go home, Teresa made a feeble resistance. Accepting the conditions, after much weeping and appropriate indulgence in hysterics, she kissed the poet, and returned to Ravenna with her husband,—of course, not without a hope that, by sending intelligence of her imminent death from despair and consumption, she would again draw her lover to her bedside in the Palazzo Guiccioli. So far, the game had been a winning one with Byron, who, after gaining from it a series of exciting adventures and much romantic enjoyment in Ravenna, Bologna, and Venice, was now quit of his playmate in the drama, without having paid her husband a single farthing for her services. He had saved the thousand pounds, returned the lady to her conjugal partner, and won the wager with which Alexander Scott had supported his strong opinion that the poet would not induce the Count to take back his young wife without *lending* the money.

A fortnight later events favoured the hope, with which Teresa retraced her steps to Ravenna. Worried by the misdemeanour of the Secretary (House Steward), whose petty peculations had tended to the inflammation of his master's weekly bills, and labouring under the dejection that attends malarial fever, Byron soon missed the Contessa, who in the sharper and more violent stages of the malady had nursed him as tenderly as he had been nursed under similar circumstances by Marianna Segati. If he congratulated himself for a day or two on the fortunate arrangement of his differences with the Count Guiccioli, and turned his thoughts hopefully to England, whither he had all along determined to go, on the quick or tardy conclusion of his engagement to the Countess, the exultation was soon followed by melancholy and annoyance at having dismissed her prematurely. Whilst Byron languished and



fretted at Venice, making his arrangements for the return to England with gloomy forebodings of a cold reception in his native country, Teresa Guiccioli was again dying of consumption at Ravenna. Weeping and pining and fretting the unhappy girl either became so seriously ill, or acted serious illness so excellently well, that her husband, her father (Count Gamba), her uncle (Marquis Cavalli), and the other chiefs of her domestic circle believed her dying. Of course there was a renewal between the separated lovers of the correspondence, which they had promised never to reopen. Whilst Byron's tender effusions only deepened the Contessa's despair, her plaintive prayers for him to visit her, once again before she breathed her last breath, overpowered the poet's waning prudence and wavering fortitude.

With significant slowness Byron had at length made all his arrangements for returning to England. He had selected his route, and announced to friends in England that he was on the point of journeying to them; his boxes were actually on board the gondola, when, as he stood at the head of the staircase, with gloves on his hands and cap on his head, he changed his mind less from force of passion than imbecility of purpose. Even at that moment, when by rousing his combativeness any opposition to his resolve might have stimulated him to persist in it, he wavered away from the path he had chosen. 'If it strike one before everything is in order, I won't go to-day!' he said, when something still remained to be done for the preparation of his arms. The hour striking before the arms were quite ready, he said, 'I stay here!' Hoppner stated the case fairly when he said that at the last it depended on the toss of a halfpenny whether the poet followed the Countess to Ravenna, or returned to England. The woman who hesitates is lost. Byron was a fanciful and hysterical woman in one half of his nature, and at times was the mere plaything of feminine fickleness and emotionality. He hesitated, and lost the tide that might have floated him back to his proper place in English society. On the morrow came the letter, inviting him to hasten to Ravenna, to accept the office of *cicisbeo* to Teresa Guiccioli. The invitation was accepted; and instead of returning to England he went to Ravenna, where he was welcomed by Teresa's relatives to a place of affectionate, if not honourable, regard in their circle. To show him proper respect, some three hundred people of the best families of Romagna were invited by Teresa's uncle, the Marquis Cavalli, to a grand reception, where music, dancing, and play went on in the same splendid *salle*. 'The Guiccioli's object,' he wrote to Hoppner on the last day of 1819, 'appeared

to be to parade her foreign friend as much as possible, and, faith, if she seemed to glory in so doing, it was not for me to be ashamed of it. Nobody seemed surprised:—all the women, on the contrary, were, as it were, delighted with the excellent example. The vice-legate, and all the other vices, were as polite as could be:—and I, who had acted on the reserve, was fairly obliged to take the lady under my arm, and look as much like a *cicisbeo* as I could on so short a notice,—to say nothing of the embarrassment of a cocked hat and sword.’

The only course by which the husband, who sanctioned this arrangement, could avoid the universal contempt of his own people, was taken by the Count Guiccioli. Having greeted Teresa’s foreign lover with cordiality as well as courtesy, the Count displayed a strong desire to live with him on terms of affection as well as of intimacy. At the Count’s invitation, Byron towards the close of January 1820 gave up his rooms at the ‘Albergo Imperiale,’ and took possession of a suite of apartments in the Palazzo Guiccioli;—an arrangement that was the less disagreeable to the owner of the palace, as his lordly lodger paid a good rent for the rooms. Close resemblances are often discernible in the manners and morality of the different social grades. On first coming to Venice in November 1816 Byron, lodging in a linendraper’s best rooms, had taken the tradesman’s wife for his mistress, with the sanction of her husband. At Ravenna he had for his mistress the wife of a wealthy noble, in whose palace he took lodgings. Resembling one another in letting their spare rooms to the foreigner, the Romagnese Count and the Venetian linendraper resembled each other also in marital complaisance.

## CHAPTER XXI.

## RAVENNA.

The Palazzo Guiccioli—Byron's Feelings for Teresa—Italian Politics—The Carbonari—Count Guiccioli's Virtuous Indignation—Teresa's Revolt against her Husband—The Decree of Separation—Byron's Political Prescience—The Capo of the Americani—The Revolutionary Movement—Its Failure—The Black Sentence and Proscription—Teresa in Exile—Byron's Slowness in following Her—Allegra at Bagna Cavallo—Poetic Fecundity at Ravenna—Migration from Ravenna to Pisa.

INCLUDING the six weeks spent in the trip to Rome and the three months of the visit to Romagna, Byron's sojourn at Venice (from the middle of November 1816 to the middle of December 1819) covered just three years and one month. Coming (for the second time) to Ravenna shortly before the Christmas of 1819, he resided there for something more than a year and ten months,—occupying till his departure for Pisa (29 October, 1821) 'the splendid apartments in the palace of Count Guiccioli,' where he received the author of 'Queen Mab' in the August of the last-mentioned year; and 'living,' as Shelley wrote to his wife, 'in considerable splendour, but within his income of about 4000*l.* a-year, 1000*l.* of which he devoted to purposes of charity.' Possibly the elder of the two poets in giving his friend the particulars of his income and expenditure put some of his contributions to brethren of the Carbonari under the heading of benevolence. But there is a concurrence of evidences that Byron (whose freaks of parsimony never seem to have been indulged to the exclusion of the indigent from his sympathy and assistance) gave alms so freely to the people of the town and neighbourhood throughout his stay at Ravenna, that his munificence provoked the suspicion of the police, whilst it covered him with the blessings of the poor.

As he could gossip lightly of the Contessa's constitutional peculiarities in an earlier and more romantic stage of his passion for the lady, it is not surprising that soon after his second coming to Ravenna Byron, in writing to Consul-General Hoppner, spoke of Teresa with curious coolness, as a person to whose imperfections he was not absolutely insensible, and of his association with her as an arrangement that might end at any moment. Even whilst he was in the full enjoyment of a novel position, accepting the hospitalities of the Contessa's relations, and 'drilling very hard how to double a shawl' with the adroitness of a gallant *cicisbeo*, he wrote to the Consul-General on January 20,



1820, 'I have not decided anything about remaining at Ravenna. I may stay a day, a week, a year, all my life; but all this depends upon what I neither see nor foresee. I came because I was called, and will go the moment I see what may render my departure proper. My attachment has neither the blindness of the beginning, nor the microscopic accuracy of the close to such liaisons; but "time and the hour" must decide what I do. I can as yet say nothing, because I hardly know anything beyond what I have told you. One needs microscopic inaccuracy to discern in these words the devotion by which the poet is alleged by Moore to have been animated towards the Countess Guiccioli. Even the poet's declaration (made to Moore on May 24, 1820) of his strong attachment to the lady, when she was in the middle of her quarrel with her husband, is accompanied with a large prudential reserve. 'I should have retreated,' he says, 'but honour, and an erysipelas which has attacked her, prevent me,—to say nothing of love, for I love her most entirely, though not enough to persuade her to sacrifice everything in a frenzy.' After the Papal decree, that separated the Count and Countess, Byron wrote to Moore on August 31, 1820, 'I only meant to be a *Cavalier Servente*, and had no idea it would turn out a romance, in the Anglo fashion;' a noteworthy admission to the biographer, who insists that real love was a *motif* in the liaison from its commencement. The only persons likely to take Moore's view of the affair, after considering the quotations of this paragraph together with the date of the previous chapter, must be persons with a singular aptitude for believing what they please, in the teeth of evidence to the contrary.

It is less surprising that in the course of a few months Count Guiccioli required his wife to dismiss her *cicisbeo*, than that he permitted her to introduce the poet in his official character to her relations, and invite him to take up his quarters under her roof. Mindful of the difference of their ages, and aware that her powerful relatives would hold him accountable for any scandal which might ensue from his want of deference to her wishes, the Count could scarcely deny his Countess a *cavalier servente*. In truth the usages of the *cicisbeat* had their origin in social tenderness for women in her position, quite as much as in social consideration for husbands in his predicament or in any general sympathy for masculine libertinism. Under these circumstances, on being required to allow his wife to avail herself of a practice that had at least the sanction of social tolerance, the Count may well have been disposed to approve of Teresa's choice of an official admirer,—and at least, to be thankful she had chosen a person whose rank and celebrity would enhance the

lustre of their circle, whilst his wealth might conduce to her husband's enrichment. It is also conceivable that he was charmed by the Englishman's aspect and address, and conceived himself an object of the poet's most flattering regard. In the earlier months of his attachment to Teresa, Byron had of course exerted himself to conciliate the lordly owner of the coach and six horses. On coming for the second time to Ravenna, he had of course approached the Count with his best smiles and a thousand delicate blandishments. And when it pleased him to wear his best manners for their management, Byron could be no less charming to men than to women. The Count therefore had more than one reason for thinking favourably of the English poet who was ready to pay handsomely for the splendid rooms assigned to him in the Palazzo Guiccioli.

According to the unreliable 'Conversations,' Byron asserted that, after winking at his intimacy with Teresa for a considerable time, the Count made exceptions to him 'as a foreigner, a heretic, an Englishman, and what was worse than all a liberal.' On coming to differ with him, the Count probably disliked him all the more for each of these reasons. But the Count had welcomed the poet, with a perfect knowledge that he was an Englishman, a free-thinker, and a liberal. The Count, however, can scarcely have anticipated that the English liberal would soon exhibit his liberalism by an activity in Italian politics, that for more than twelve months made the Palazzo Guiccioli a place of reunion for the Romagnese Carbonari. Byron is represented to have told Medwin that the Count would have continued to acquiesce in the liaison, had his wife's gallant been an Italian. But, though Byron may have said so in all sincerity or to 'bam' his listener, no discreet reader will believe that, had Teresa's *cicisbeo* been an Italian, the Count would have acquiesced in proceedings that, by making his palace a centre of conspiracy against the government, made it an object of suspicion to the police and may well have caused its owner to be suspected of participating in the counsels and projects of the Carbonari. It is significant of the order and relation of events at the Palazzo Guiccioli that Byron's letters to his English correspondents afford evidence of his lively concern in Italian politics for some weeks before they contain references to the Count's desire to be quit of his troublesome lodger:—no easy matter for the Count, of whom Byron had hired the splendid apartments on terms that secured him from sudden and capricious ejection.

On April 16, 1820, after begging Murray for prompt acknowledgment of the receipt of certain copy, the poet says, 'I have, besides, another reason for desiring you to be speedy, which is,



that there is **THAT** brewing in Italy which will speedily cut off all security of communication, and set all your Anglo-travellers flying in every direction, with their usual fortitude in foreign tumults. . . . I shall, if permitted by the natives, remain to see what will come of it, and perhaps to take a turn with them, like Dugald Dalgetty and his horse, in case of business; for I shall think it by far the most interesting spectacle and moment in existence, to see the Italians send the barbarians of all nations back to their own dens. . . . No Italian can hate an Austrian more than I do: unless it be the English, the Austrians seem to me the most obnoxious race under the sky. . . . Write while you can; for it is but the toss up of a paul that there will not be a row that will somewhat retard the mail by-and-by.'—A week later the poet writes to his publisher (April 23, 1820), 'We are on the verge of a *row* here. Last night they have over-written all the city walls with "Up with the republic!" and "Death to the Pope!" &c., &c., &c. This would be nothing in London, where the walls are privileged. But here it is a different thing: they are not used to such fierce political descriptions, and the police is all on the alert, and the Cardinal glares pale through all his purple. . . . April 24, 1820, 8 o'clock P.M. The police have been, all noon and after, searching for the inscribers, but have caught none as yet. They must have been all night about it, for the "Live republics—Death to Popes and Priests" are innumerable, and plastered over all the palaces: ours has plenty. There is "Down with the Nobility!" too; they are down enough already, for that matter.'—Five weeks, *less* one day (May 20, 1820), after the date of the first of these notes, the poet writes, 'The Countess G. is on the eve of being separated.'

In April 1820, the Count Guiccioli found himself in a position alike ludicrous and exasperating,—peculiarly exasperating because it was so unutterably ridiculous. In his desire to make money out of his wife's *cicisbeo*, he had invited the English poet to reside under his roof; and Byron had scarcely acted on the invitation and found himself the temporary master of the best rooms of the Count's palace, when he made haste to busy himself in Italian politics in a way that made the house a head-quarters of the Carbonari, and exposed its owner to suspicion of complicity in his tenant's doings. By a slip of the pen, Karl Elze speaks of 'the Guiccioli family' as favouring Carbonarism, and attributes the poet's participation in the conspiracy to his warm sympathy with the family. The Gambas (father and son) were zealous chiefs of the secret league, though Byron (playing with the dupe he delighted to 'bam') gravely assured poor Tom



Medwin that they 'took no part in the affair' which resulted in their proscription. Teresa went heart and soul with her father and brother into the political movement. But the Gambas were not the Guiccioli family. To the rich Count Guiccioli, with nothing to gain from a successful revolution and much to lose from participation in an abortive attempt at one, conspiracy against the existing government was by no means the attractive enterprise that it was to the needy Gambas whose best hope of brighter fortunes lay in the movement for a change of rulers. Had Count Guiccioli been of one mind with his wife's brother and father, the significant menace, 'Down with the Nobility!' would not have been inscribed on the walls of his palace. Between the secret friends of the Gambas and Teresa's English gallant, who were threatening him with the extinction of the nobility, and the agents of the papal government who treated him with ominous reserve whilst they set spies to watch his house and visitors, the Count Guiccioli was in an awkward predicament, and had reason to curse the hour when he invited Byron to come within his walls.

To be quit of so ineligible an inmate, the Count required Teresa to dismiss her admirer,—a demand that drew from her a refusal to do any such thing. The immediate result of the lady's mutiny against her husband was that he feigned astonishment at her devotion to a man whom he had imagined her to regard with mere feelings of friendship. One can imagine the scornful laughter this affectation provoked from Teresa. But her derision only whipt the Count to declare with greater vehemence his abhorrence of her wickedness; his impression that his own social qualities had alone drawn Byron to Ravenna; his dismay at discovering his wife's betrayer in the perfidious Englishman; his determination to sue for a decree of separation from her, if she did not forthwith order her paramour to be off. From the Count, to whom she gave only words of ridicule and aversion, Teresa hastened to Byron, who (according to his own accounts of the affair) urged her to obey the dictates of prudence rather than the impulse of love—to pitch him over, and, making up the quarrel with her husband, to live with him on terms of apparent affectionateness. 'I will stay with him,' Teresa answered, 'if he will let you remain with me. It is hard that I should be the only woman in Romagna who is not to have her *Amico*; but, if not, I will *not* live with him; and as for the consequences,— . . . Tut!'

The stir of Ravenna's little world was prodigious. Scarcely a man in all Romagna had a word to say for the Count, who was rendering himself contemptible by feigning surprise at his wife's

liaison with a foreigner. Teresa had her own sex on her side almost to a woman;—the ladies declaring it intolerable that, after first conniving at the affair and then openly sanctioning it, the Count should now presume to have a voice in the matter. As Teresa would not yield, the Count prepared to put his threat in execution. But in his steps for getting a separation he encountered two difficulties. There was no *sufficient* evidence of facts, that would have to be proved without inferential aid before the Papal court could decide in his favour. Another and more humiliating difficulty was that the Count could not find an advocate to undertake his cause; ‘the whole bar’ (as one would say in England) being of opinion that so miserable a plaintiff—fool if he was really unaware of the liaison, rogue and paltry hypocrite if he knew of the matter all along—should be left to plead his own cause. Pressure of some sort was of course put on Byron to end the scandal by withdrawing from Ravenna. But in considerations of love and honour he found sufficient reasons for remaining by Teresa’s side and under her husband’s roof. In truth, the game was so flattering to his vanity and so diverting to his sense of humour, that he could not deny himself the pleasure of playing at it a little longer. The Count Guiccioli having already declined to settle the matter by a duel with his father-in-law (old Count Gamba), there was no hope for a settlement of the dispute by means of a duel between the lady’s husband and her admirer. But though the Count was not likely to ‘call’ the poet ‘out,’ he was thought capable of sending a bravo to waylay Byron during one of his daily rides in the pine-forest. Teresa’s husband being suspected of having in former time perpetrated two assassinations by deputy, Byron was strongly advised to be on his guard and have his pistols ready for immediate use when he rode through the immemorial pines. Though he affected to think himself guarded from assassination by the covetousness of the Count, who had not the courage to spend twenty scudi on a clean-handed cut-throat, the poet after this friendly warning never omitted to look to his ‘primings’ before he put his feet in the stirrups.

Eventually the conflict was ended by the act of the lady who, in opposition to the wishes of some of her friends, petitioned the Court for the very fate with which the Count had threatened her. To heighten the comicality of the whole business, Teresa’s prayer for separation was resisted stoutly by her husband, who by making the most of his wrongs hoped to escape an order of the Court for payment of alimony. In this, however, he was disappointed. In consideration of his extraordinary behaviour, in first conniving at her misbehaviour and then oppressing her



with scandalous exposure, the Court, whilst granting Teresa's prayer for separation, ordered him to return her trifling portion, surrender her carriage and jewels, and pay her an alimony of 200*l.* a-year; it being further provided by the decree that she should henceforth reside under her father's roof and protection or retire to a cloister.

In consequence of this decree (delivered at Rome and published at Ravenna a few days later, July 12, 1820), Teresa Guiccioli, still only seventeen years of age, withdrew to her father's villa (some fifteen miles distant from the city of her birth), where she resided for several months, receiving two or three visits in the course of each month from her lover, who continued to live in the palazzo of the Count, whose domestic affairs he had disturbed in so remarkable a manner. However distasteful and vexatious this arrangement may have been to the lady, who would of course have preferred to see her lover oftener and for longer visits, it was neither 'unwelcome' (as Moore admits) to the poet, nor unfavourable to her power over him. A day or two of Teresa's company once a fortnight was probably enough for the contentment of the worshipper, whose passion was more likely to be quickened than quenched by the successive intervals of absence; and it is conceivable that a few months later when she was living under her father's roof in Ravenna, within a few hundred yards of the palace of which she had ceased to be the mistress, the poet missed the excitement of the fortnightly gallops to the remote villa, and wished her at a distance that would have exempted him from the obligation to visit her daily. Leigh Hunt suggests that (as the stipulation for Teresa's residence in her father's house or a convent must have been intended to separate her from Byron no less effectually than the decree itself separated her from her husband), the arrangement, which defeated the purpose of the condition whilst complying with its letter, cannot have been anticipated by the Pope and must have been offensive to serious and devout Catholics. But though Count Gamba's action in winking at the liaison may have displeased many of his neighbours, there is no reason for supposing that the stratagem of the lovers occasioned surprise to the framers of the decree. On the contrary, there are grounds for a rather strong opinion that the Papal authorities were fully prepared for the avoidance of the ostensible object of the stipulation, and even made the condition in order that its apparent purpose should be so avoided. Anyhow, instead of forbidding the arrangement by which Byron had the enjoyment of his mistress with her father's sanction, the Vice-Legate and his associates exhibited significant indifference



to the irregularity, which they turned adroitly to their advantage when they wished to elbow the poet out of Romagna.

It speaks much for Byron's political prescience that he believed Greece might still be free, when to hold the opinion was to be rated with mere visionaries and enthusiasts by serious statesmen, and that, writing 'The Prophecy of Dante' more than half a century before Rome became the capital of reunited Italy, he penned the glorious verses,—

'Oh ! my own beauteous land ! so long laid low,  
 So long the grave of thy own children's hopes,  
 When there is but required a single blow  
 To break the chain, yet—yet the Avenger stops,  
 And Doubt and Discord step 'twixt thine and thee,  
 And join their strength to that which with thee copes ;  
 What is there wanting then to set thee free,  
 And show thy beauty in its fullest light ?  
 To make the Alps impassable ; and we,  
 Her sons, may do this with *one* deed——Unite.'

And it detracts nothing from this prescience and the honour due to it, to say that in the domain of politics Byron was a sentimentalist, in the best and finest sense of the word, who after choosing his party from sympathy, was more indebted for his political principles and convictions to emotional influences than to passionless deliberation. That men are more obedient to sentiment than to facts was a favourite maxim with the Younger Disraeli, whose influence over his contemporaries was largely due to a fine apprehensiveness of the poetry underlying familiar things, and an habitual disposition to discover a sentimental significance and value in the matters, that are mere matters of course to official underlings who, living wholly in them, seldom look an inch beyond them. Accountable for the steadiness and consistency, that in politics distinguished the man of dangerous 'mobility,' the force, which inspires multitudes with a single purpose and causes millions to move like one, was scarcely more operative in the sensitive and imaginative Byron at moments when he was wholly a poet, than at moments when he tried to be only a politician. It was the source of the enthusiasm that, carrying him into the ranks of the Italian Carbonari, made him a participator in their miserably insufficient preparations for a noble enterprise. It was the source of the less sanguine impulse that determined him to fight in Greece for a cause, of whose success he was far less confident than desirous. It was also the light by which he foresaw events, neither hoped for nor imagined by the commonplace politicians who, with all their assiduity and usefulness, are mere manipulators of affairs lying immediately under their noses.

Under any circumstances and in every quarter of the world, this political sentimentalist would have played a similar part, or none at all, in the political arena. For the morbid selfishness, which in Hobhouse's opinion was the darkest stain on his friend's character, had nothing in common with the sordid selfishness, which in every community disposes the baser sort of prosperous people to side in politics with the prevailing party, simply because it is the stronger party. Had his nature possessed no other endowments making for benevolence, his sensibility and superabundant compassionateness would by themselves have saved him from becoming an unsympathetic churl or callous despot. So sensitive to the sufferings of others as to be incapable of witnessing physical pain without shrinking from it, or regarding any kind of mental distress without longing to relieve it, the poet, who had a tear for every grief and a coin for every mendicant, and who, retaining to the last his early propensity for protecting his inferiors, spoilt his servants by indulgence whilst he made playmates of their children,—was precisely the man to feel intense pity for the victims and intense hatred for the doers of oppression;—albeit, in his fits of gusty anger and his longer moods of sullen rage, he could be wildly violent and cruel to the individuals who provoked his animosity in personal matters.

Whilst pity impelled him to embrace the weak, combativeness and passionate intolerance of injustice disposed him to battle with the strong. At Ravenna, where he enjoyed the confidence of the nobles who favoured the conspiracy, and was worshipfully regarded by the peasantry whom he conciliated by lordly munificence and gracious bearing,—nobles amongst whom he found persons of culture and lofty sentiment; a peasantry under whose rudeness and ignorance he discovered courage and affectionateness,—it was natural for a man so sympathetic and fervid to espouse the cause of a people, groaning under the grievances of execrable misgovernment. Led by the contemplation of the troubles of Italy to brood mournfully over the wrongs done and endured in every region of the earth's surface, it is not wonderful that, on closing the survey of man's cruelty to man, he threw himself into a movement which promised to stay the growth of human iniquity and to diminish the sum of human wretchedness in southern Europe.

It would, however, be a mistake to suppose that no considerations of personal interest and ambition mingled with the loftier aims and impulses of benevolence that determined the poet's action towards the Italian patriots. Though he would have favoured the Carbonari from sincere and romantic devotion

to freedom, and in the absence of all other motives would have embraced their enterprise from enthusiastic approval of its principles and object, there can be no question that Byron was regardful of his own advantage in furthering the movement for the advantage of Italy. To the poet, acutely remorseful for his Venetian excesses, service in so righteous a cause was all the more congenial from the consideration that it would probably enable him to recover, together with his own self-respect, that large portion of the world's respect which had been withdrawn from the tenant of the Palazzo Mocenigo. Should insurrection result in revolution, and the revolution be glorified with success, no small portion of the honour of the achievement would pertain to the English peer who, coming to the aid of the patriots almost at the inception of their enterprise, had lent them money, provided them with arms, and led them to victory on hard-fought fields. Covered with fame and glory he would return to England in triumph, to receive the applause ever given ungrudgingly in the land of freedom to successful liberators. Instead of reappearing in London, unheralded and unannounced, doubtful of his welcome and apprehensive of slights, to live at first in comparative seclusion with a few old friends, and then to feel his way with delicate and timorous steps back into society, he would be greeted at Dover with acclamations, and find himself the idol of a party, if something less than the hero of the nation. Even though it should miscarry, a campaign for Italian freedom would exhibit him in an honourable light, and afford him opportunities for figuring amongst men of action. At the worst, it would divert attention from the least creditable passages of his career, and yield him an auspicious occasion for resuming his old *rôle* of the hero of his own poems. At the best, it might invest him with the pomp and power of a military dictator, and render his name no less terrible to monarchs in their capitals than to the curates of English villages. In his boyhood, when his regiment of 'Byron's blacks' used to turn the fortune of imaginary fields, he nursed hopes of martial distinction; and to the last, the tinsel and toys of war had a fascination for the poet, who, after emptying the vials of his scorn on such vulgar heroes as Suwarrow and Wellington, bought the three gilt helmets (that tickled Leigh Hunt's malicious humour), and died the commander-in-chief of a nation fighting for freedom. One of the curious features of his story is the disregard, quickened sometimes to angry disdain, in which he held the writer's vocation. Assuming it in the first instance for youthful vanity, to astonish his school-fellows and win the approval of young ladies, he to the last rated the pen as little



more than a plaything,—using it by turns for sport and malice ; valuing it fitfully as a weapon ; but never honouring it steadily as the sacred and only instrument for the loftiest and largest aims of his ambition. Even when he was meditating the lines (to be placed amongst the manliest and most sincere of all his egotistic verses)

‘I twine  
My hopes of being remember’d in my line  
With my land’s language ; if too fond and far  
These aspirations in their scope incline,—  
If my fame should be, as my fortunes are,  
Of hasty growth and blight, and dull Oblivion bar  
My name from out the temple where the dead  
Are honour’d by the nations—let it be—  
And light the laurels on a loftier head !—’

he was wishful for a renown to which the deathless productions of his poetical genius would be mere matters of subsidiary beauty, like the traceries of the chisel on a superb work of Gothic architecture. ‘If I live,’ he wrote to Moore on February 28th, 1817, at the very time when the reviewers were busy with the poem, containing those lines, ‘ten years longer, you will see, however, that it is not over with me—I don’t mean in literature, for that is nothing ; and it may seem odd enough to say, I do not think it my vocation. But you will see that I shall do something or other—the times and fortune permitting—that, “like the cosmogony or creation of the world, will puzzle the philosopher of all ages.” But I doubt whether my constitution will hold out.’ Other passages of similar purport may be found in the letters of the poet. From 1814, when he gave orders for the suppression of all his writings, to 1823, when on his departure for Greece he congratulated himself on having done at last with scribbling, Byron was perpetually looking away from the labours, that will ever cause his name to be remembered in his line with his land’s language, for some field of enterprise in which, without the pen’s aid, by deeds instead of words, he might build up a renown, nobler and more satisfying to his moral aspirations than the fame that, surprising him in a morning and growing with every moon, had been even more fruitful of sorrow to his heart than of flattery to his pride. Sometimes the dreamer’s fancy turned to South America as a scene for exploits of chivalric adventure and romantic benevolence. At other times it played about the rocks and valleys of some island of the Grecian archipelago, whose people he would rule with gentle sway and patriarchal dignity. At Ravenna he saw in the revolutionary movement an opening to a career that, gratifying his strong desire for the only kind of martial honour for which he had

any appetite whatever,—the glory to be won in battles for freedom,—would purge his fame of the stains put upon it by passion and uncleanness, and give him place amongst the heroes of humanity.—Moreover, in the survey of the forces that carried Byron into the ranks of the Carbonari, allowance must be made for his need of some fierce though pure excitement to replace the agitations of sensual intemperance. Allowance must also be made for the influence of the poet's liking for Pietro Gamba (Teresa's brother), a young Italian whose patriotic fervour was associated with charms of appearance and address, that would under any circumstances have commended him to the affectionate regard of his sister's admirer.

Welcomed to their ranks by the Carbonari with the consideration due to his rank and celebrity, Byron, without being required to pass through the subordinate degrees, was appointed to be a chief of his division, the *Americani*. Speaking of conspirators thus placed under his command the poet wrote to Murray on Sept. 4, 1821: 'The "*Mericali*," of whom they call me the Capo (or Chief), mean Americans, which is the name given in *Romagna* to a part of the Carbonari; that is to say, to the *popular* part, the *troops* of the Carbonari. They were originally a society of hunters in the forest, who took the name of Americans, but at present comprise some thousands, &c.; but I shan't let you further into the secret, which may be participated by the postmasters. Why they thought me their Chief, I know not: their Chiefs are like Legion, being many. However, it is a post of more honour than profit, for, now that they are persecuted, it is fit I should aid them; and so I have done, as far as my means would permit. They will rise again some day, for these fools of the government are blundering; they actually seem to know *nothing*; for they have arrested and banished many of their own party, and let others escape who are not their friends.' In the next paragraph the writer asks, 'What think'st thou of Greece?'—a question to be remembered as evidence that, if he was not meditating some such adventure as the expedition which cost him his life, the poet was watching with interest the affairs of Greece before he quitted Ravenna.

The poet having attained the dignity of 'Capo' of the *Americani*, the palace, from which he had ousted in so strange a way the host and hostess who had welcomed him to it a few months earlier, became the head-quarters of the revolutionary movement in Ravenna, whilst little Allegra and her nurse remained its inmates. Conspirators came with secrecy for conference with the 'Capo,' who, delighting in the romance of the affair and the

novelty of his position, spoke enthusiastically of the enterprise as 'the poetry of politics.' Spies also found their way into the Palazzo, who hastened from the 'Capo's' chamber of audience to the chiefs of the Ravennese police,—persons much better informed than Byron imagined of all that was done under the Count Guiccioli's roof. One of these fellows is supposed to have played his assumed part of an agent of the Constitutional Government of Naples so adroitly, as to receive from the poet the following address to the Neapolitan Government,—'An Englishman, a friend to liberty, having understood that the Neapolitans permit even foreigners to contribute to the good cause, is desirous that they should do him the honour of accepting a thousand louis, which he takes the liberty of offering. Having already, not long since, been an ocular witness of the despotism of the Barbarians in the States occupied by them in Italy, he sees, with the enthusiasm natural to a cultivated man, the generous determination of the Neapolitans to assert their well-won independence. As a member of the English House of Peers, he would be a traitor to the principles which placed the reigning family of England on the throne, if he were not grateful for the noble lesson so lately given both to people and to kings. The offer which he desires to make is small in itself, as must always be that presented from an individual to a nation; but he trusts that it will not be the last they will receive from his countrymen. His distance from the frontier, and the feeling of his personal incapacity to contribute efficaciously to the service of the nation, prevents him from proposing himself as worthy of the lowest commission, for which experience and talent might be requisite. But if, as a mere volunteer, his presence were not a burden to whomsoever he might serve under, he would repair to whatever place the Neapolitan Government might point out, there to obey the orders and participate in the dangers of his commanding officer, without any other motive than that of sharing the destiny of a brave nation, defending itself against the self-called Holy Alliance, which but combines the vice of hypocrisy with despotism.'

Having written to Murray on May 8, 1820, that he should possibly visit England in the autumn, should Italy be quiet, Byron found 'the poetry of politics' far too exciting in August 1820, for him to think of running just then from Ravenna to London. 'We are going to fight a little next month, if the Huns don't cross the Po, and probably if they do. I can't say more now. If anything happens, you have matter for a posthumous work in MS.; so pray be civil!' he wrote to the publisher on the 31st of the last-named month. Twenty-three days later, the same correspondent was assured that should 'the



Germans pass the Po, they will be treated to a mass out of Cardinal de Retz's *Breviary*.' On September 28, 1820, the 'Capo' at Ravenna wrote to Albemarle Street, 'Politics here still savage and uncertain. However, we are all in our "bandaliers," to join the "Highlanders if they cross the Forth," i. e. to crush the Austrians if they cross the Po.' Waxing fiercer and more abusive as the year neared its end, the poet wrote more and more truculently of the barbarians with a fool for their emperor. The 9th evening of December heard the shot that laid the Commandant of Ravenna dead on the stones, within two hundred paces of the Palazzo Guiccioli, and almost under the eyes of the poet, who caused the victim of assassination to be taken from the cold pavement to a bed within the palace. Fighting seemed a mere question of minutes on January 7, 1821, when Pietro Gamba took Byron aside at a conversazione, and whispered him the government meant that very night to make arrests that would be resisted by the patriots;—news which caused Byron to sit through the night, expecting to hear the drums and musquetry every moment. On the morrow (January 8, 1821) the Capo of the Americani was giving out arms to Pietro Gamba, and arranging that in case of a row the liberals should rally at his house, and advising his confederates to attack in detail, and to divide the attention of the troops by dividing themselves into small parties and fighting at different points at the same time. Fifteen days later (January 23, 1821) Byron jotted on leaves of his diary, 'Heard of nothing but war—the cry is still, "They come." The Car<sup>i</sup> seem to have no plan—nothing fixed amongst themselves, how, when, or what to do. In that case they will make nothing of this project, so often postponed, and never put in action. Came home, and gave some necessary orders in case of circumstances requiring a change of place. I shall act according to what may seem proper, when I hear decidedly what the Barbarians mean to do. At present, they are building a bridge of boats over the Po, which looks very warlike.' At this moment the diarist thought of moving towards Ancona, should Teresa and her father be compelled to retire; he was in doubt what to do with Allegra; and disgusted at the preparations for the Carnival, whilst 'half the City are getting their affairs in marching trim.' Another twenty-four hours, and 'the Germans are on the Po,' whilst the principal liberals of the city and surrounding country were away on a shooting party,—no 'pretext of the chase for a grand reunion of counsellors and chiefs,' which would have been well, but 'nothing more or less than a real, snivelling, popping, small-shot, water-hen waste of powder, ammunition and shot, for their own special amusement.'

By this time it was manifest to Byron that the movement would do him no credit. Despondent for the insurrection he became querulous about his private affairs,—the loss of a lawsuit touching his Lancashire property, and the miscarriage of his project for the investment of money, in the hands of his wife's trustees, on mortgage of Lord Blessington's Dublin property, being two vexatious incidents of the previous year. 'In the same year, 1820,' the diarist continues with significant bitterness, the Countess G<sup>a</sup> G<sup>i</sup> nata T. G., *in despite of all I said and did to prevent it*, would separate from her husband :—a memorandum no less eloquent of the writer's morbid selfishness, than of Teresa's loss of influence over him. Seven months had not passed since the decree for the Contessa's separation from her husband ; and already Byron was repenting of the liaison, and regarding the separation as a serious *contretemps*. Worse still, he was resenting the wilfulness of the lady who, in spite of his expostulations, had encumbered him with affection he no longer valued, and with obligations he could not easily avoid !

For another month, keeping his forebodings of ludicrous failure to himself, Byron did his best to encourage the patriots who, in the absence of discipline, organization, clearness of purpose and sufficient leaders, lacked the most important requisites for success. There were moments when he hoped that after all matters would go less ill than he feared with the insurrection. Of the enthusiasm of his 'Americani' he had no cause to complain ; and he was willing to believe that the spirit of Italy declared itself in the ringing cheers with which they greeted him at one of their meetings in the forest. The rumour that Piedmont had risen was glad tidings. Things seemed coming to a crisis on the 30th of January, when the poet wrote in his diary, 'The ferment in men's minds at present cannot be conceived without seeing it.' On hearing that the Germans were concentrating at Mantua and would be crossing the Po on the 15th of February the chiefs of the Romagnese Carbonari determined to resist the passage. 'The Germans are ordered to march,' the poet wrote in his journal under date of February 5, 'and Italy is for the ten thousandth time to become a field of battle.' But for all these brave words there was no battle, and the barbarians crossed the river without opposition on the 7th day of the month, eight full days before they were expected to appear in force on the northern bank. Having made their arrangements on instructions from the Neapolitan Government, the Romagnese liberals seem to have been blameless for the miscarriage that robbed them of their opportunity. Had the fault been with them, the result could scarcely have been more painful and exasperating to the

more fervid and sanguine of the Romagnese Carbonari, who saw the Germans, some fifty or sixty thousand strong, march past them. Byron tried to hope that the Neapolitans would make a stubborn resistance, in which case the invaders would soon find themselves attacked in their rear by the thousands of gallant fellows, who for the moment could only stand aside and wait for news from the south. He tried also to persuade himself that fifty or sixty thousand troops, however well disciplined and well equipped, 'might as well attempt to conquer the world as secure Italy in its present state.' There was brave talk in Ravenna of an attempt to cut off the invaders' artillery, if news should come in another day or two that the Neapolitans were up and doing. But trains of artillery are not captured by saucy words, and the army of sixty thousand men was sufficient in every respect for the work it had in hand. On the 24th of February, Byron had the doleful news which he condensed into four words, 'The plan has missed.' The conspiracy that should have been fruitful of revolution had barely yielded an insurrection.

Before the disastrous intelligence came to him from the South, Byron had discovered how little reliance could be placed on the fervour of the Ravennese patriots. At the opening of February, when there were hopes of an immediate rising in Romagna, he had spent a considerable sum on bayonets, muskets, and ammunition, that were hastily distributed amongst those of the conspirators who were too poor to arm themselves. A few days later, when the Germans had crossed the river and were marching down south, the Government issued a proclamation that persons found in possession of arms without lawful authority for bearing them would be dealt with as participators in the insurrection:—an announcement that, filling the Ravennese with alarm, made them chiefly desirous to be rid of the weapons which they had so recently seized with valorous emotion. Hastening to the Palazzo Guiccioli the patriots, who had been equipped at the poet's expense, insisted on being relieved of the arms and powder, that in another hour might bring them to ruin. Absent from home when these excited people flocked to his palace, Byron had no need to ask what had taken place when on his return he found in the lower rooms of his residence the tools and munitions of warfare that had been thus hastily and without a word of forewarning thrown back upon his hands. Fortunately the arms had been received by Lega and two other servants, of whose fidelity he had no suspicion, in the absence of those of his retainers who, in the altered state of affairs, would have immediately reported the incident to the police.



The suppression of the insurrection was of course followed by the stern measures of vengeance and policy, that are the ordinary as well as dismal consequences of unsuccessful revolt. Byron's peculiar faculty for discovering an outrageous grievance in every matter-of-course that interfered in any way with his personal convenience must be held largely accountable for the extravagant terms in which he wrote to Hoppner and Murray of the ferocious malignity, that animated the Papal Government towards the unfortunate Carbonari. From the violence of some of his letters on this subject, one might suppose that the chiefs of the conspiracy had been guilty of nothing worse than a little rash talk, instead of nursing a scheme for civil war and revolution. If the 'black sentence and proscription' had not included the Gambas, the poet would have been less indignant at the merciless edicts that 'exiled about a thousand people of the best families all over the Roman States;' and his concern for the Gambas was quickened and intensified by concern for himself. Whether their sentence of banishment was accompanied with confiscation of their slender possessions (as Medwin represents), or was *not* so accompanied (as Hobhouse asserts in the 'Westminster Review' article), the Gambas had nothing to complain of in the punishment, for which they must have been prepared, when they first committed themselves to the conspiracy, should the enterprise miscarry. Nor do they seem to have felt astonishment at the decree of exile, or to have claimed sympathy for being in any unusual way the victims of injustice. Byron, however, saw much to complain of in the order of banishment that disturbed his domestic arrangements, and made it less easy for him to withdraw from an association, that was already yielding him more disquiet than contentment.

Even Byron could not venture to charge the Papal Government with precipitancy of action towards the Gambas. More than four months had passed since the suppression of the insurrection, when in the middle of July 1821, Teresa's father and brother were ordered to quit the Pope's dominions, Teresa Guiccioli being at the same time informed that she must accompany the elder of the two Counts, so as to comply with the condition for her residence under his roof, if she would avoid consignment to a cloister. Together with this intimation the Contessa received intelligence that her husband, still desirous of her society and willing to condone her numerous offences against his honour, had gone to Rome for the purpose of moving the authorities to command her to retire forthwith to a convent or return at once to his embrace. That the object of this intelligence was to dispose the lady for immediate flight, at

which the Government meant to connive, may be inferred from the official complaisance that at the same moment provided her with a passport for crossing the Papal frontier. The intelligence and the passport came to the lady, whilst she was again staying at the villa, which had been her home in the summer and autumn of the previous year. Seizing pen and paper the Contessa, who could not venture to go herself to Ravenna, wrote a hasty letter to her lover and despatched it by a special courier to the Palazzo Guiccioli. 'This alone,' she wrote in her mother-tongue, after giving him some of the particulars of her position, 'was wanting to fill up the measure of my despair. Help me, my dear Byron, for I am in a situation most terrible; and without you, I can resolve on nothing . . . . has just been with me, having been sent by . . . . to tell me that I must depart from Ravenna before next Tuesday, as my husband has had recourse to Rome, for the purpose of either forcing me to return to him, or else putting me in a convent; and the answer from thence is expected in a few days. I must not speak of this to any one,—I must escape by night; for, if my project should be discovered, it will be impeded, and my passport (which the goodness of heaven has permitted me, I know not how, to obtain) will be taken from me. Byron! I am in despair!—If I must leave you here without knowing when I shall see you again, if it is your will that I should suffer so cruelly, I am resolved to remain. They may put me in a convent; I shall die,—but—but then you cannot aid me, and I cannot reproach you. I know not what they tell me, for my agitation overwhelms me:—and why? Not because I fear my present danger, but solely, I call heaven to witness, solely because I must leave you.'—Scarcely more eloquent of the writer's passionate attachment to the poet than of broken confidence in his devotion to her, it is the letter of a woman who, wanting her lover's counsel and encouragement in a moment of urgent trouble, and yearning to see the beauty of his face and hear the music of his voice once again, if only for a few minutes, before going into exile, felt the necessity of writing strenuously in order to make him mount horse and gallop to her side. It is significant of his growing coldness to her, that there was need for her to write to the poet, who cannot have been unaware that she was likely at any moment to be ordered to quit her native province. Had she not distrusted his loyalty to the woman who had dishonoured herself for his sake, she would have written no more than, 'Come quickly; I am in trouble.' The suggestion that he might will her to suffer cruelly, the suspicion that he would not be sorry to know she was in a



convent, and the hint that death might prevent her from reproaching him, would never have dropt from her pen to the tear-blotted paper, had she been troubled by no doubts of his fidelity.

Playing on the credulity of the simple fellow whom he delighted to 'bam,' and at the same time indulging his propensity for making himself the hero of a romantic story, Byron told poor Tom Medwin how he had smuggled Teresa out of Ravenna, on discovering 'a plot laid with the sanction of the Legate for shutting her up in a convent for life;' the truth of the matter being that he remained in his luxurious quarters at Ravenna—in the very palace of which she would have remained the mistress, had he not crossed her path—whilst she went her miserable way from her father's country-house to Bologna, and from Bologna to Florence, unattended by her lover, though cheered on the road by occasional letters from his pen.

As for the Legate's plot for immuring the lady, nothing was further from his purpose than to put her in a convent, when he meant to use her as a decoy for drawing Byron out of the part of Italy, where he had for some time been a very troublesome resident. The touch and trick of petty state-craft, the cunning and artifice of the *chef-de-police*, are apparent in all the successive turns and stages of the rather droll business. So long as the Legate thought it best for the Papal States, if not for the repose of his particular province, that Byron should remain at Ravenna under the observation of a vigilant police, the Gambas were allowed to remain in Romagna, and were even led to hope that they would escape punishment for their complicity in the designs of the Carbonari. Indulgence having been shown them for a few months for reasons of policy, another course was pursued towards the two Counts in the middle of July, when, having by the Contessa's gentle influence disposed Byron to linger contentedly at Ravenna, where for the moment he would be least mischievous to the general cause of order, they were required to withdraw him by the same influence from the city, where his presence by sustaining the spirit of local disaffection was embarrassing, though scarcely dangerous. In the same month two circumstances quickened the Cardinal's desire for the poet's withdrawal from the palace which, with a flagrant abuse of the privileges of hospitality, he had converted into a place of arms and conspiracy, and would have held as a kind of fortress, had the conspirators required it for that purpose. By their petition to the Cardinal, that he would condescend to entreat Byron to remain in Ravenna, the poor of the city determined the Legate to compass the poet's speedy



departure from the place, where he had acquired an inconvenient influence over the populace. The recent fray between one of the Papal officers and one of Byron's servants was another reason why the Cardinal wished to be rid of Teresa Guiccioli's admirer. Hence the extrusion of the Gambas from the Papal States, in order that Teresa might be constrained to follow her father into exile, and might draw in her trail the English lord, whose turbulent temper had infected his very menials. The Legate may well have assumed, that to send Teresa into exile would be to send Byron in a trice after her,—that the lover, for whose sake she had sacrificed so much, would follow her train whithersoever she carried it. His Eminence would have been less confident for the success of his stratagem, had he known how Byron regarded the decree of separation, which he docketed in his diary with two other serious misfortunes of the previous year,—an adverse judgment in the Court of Chancery, and a serious pecuniary discomfiture from the perversity of his wife's trustees.

Though his project for getting Byron out of the Papal territory succeeded eventually, His Eminence had cause to murmur at the length of time the poet lingered at the Palazzo Guiccioli after his mistress had taken her departure. Probably because she felt it incumbent on her honour to account for the poet's reluctance to follow her out of Romagna, in a way that was most creditable to his chivalric devotion and steadfastness, Teresa Guiccioli was careful to impress on Moore that the delay was partly due to his affection for Ravenna, partly to his care for the interests of her relations, but chiefly to the fact that, by taking his measures deliberately and moving at a time of his own manifest choice, he avoided the discredit of being supposed to leave the city at the order of a tyrannical government. Hesitancy in selecting another place of abode, and the constitutional dilatoriness that at all times disinclined him to turn his back on any spot in which he had planted himself, were, no doubt, mainly accountable for the poet's contentment to remain more than three months at Ravenna without Teresa. It cannot however be questioned that he would have set out for Pisa somewhat sooner than the twenty-ninth of October, had his attachment to 'the Lady of the Land' been the same overpowering passion towards the close of 1821 that it was in the summer and autumn of 1819. It points to the same conclusion that August had not closed before Teresa became impatient for her lord's society and so dissatisfied with his excellent reasons for remaining where he was, that she wrote to Shelley (whom she had not yet seen), entreating him not to leave Ravenna without his friend. When this

significant prayer came to him from the lady, who would scarcely have made it had she been in no degree distrustful of her power over her proper poet, Shelley was staying at the Palazzo, where he found Byron splendidly lodged,—living within his income of 4000*l.* a-year (albeit with ten horses in his stable), and looking altogether another man from the Lord Byron of Venice, unable to digest food, and consumed with hectic fever. No less surprised than delighted at his host's 'great improvement in every respect—in genius, temper, moral views, health, and happiness,' Shelley was disposed to attribute the change for the better altogether to La Guiccioli, who 'seemed from her letters to be a very amiable woman.' Two months later, when after forming her personal acquaintance, he had used his opportunities for studying her character during daily intercourse with her, and probably had also learned how little she had to do with her lord's salvation from his Venetian depravity, Shelley took a less cheerful view of the connection which he had commended much too highly. 'La Guiccioli,' he wrote in October 1821, 'is a very pretty, sentimental, innocent Italian, who has sacrificed an immense fortune for the sake of Lord Byron, and who, if I know anything of my friend, of her, and of human nature, will hereafter have plenty of leisure and opportunity to repent her rashness.'

It has already been told how Allegra was sent to Bagna Cavallo, to the lively indignation of her mother, whose predictions of trouble from the arrangement were justified by the event. On January 23, 1821, when the Barbarians were building their bridge over the Po, and arrangements were being made for immediate war in Romagna, Byron wrote in his diary, 'I am somewhat puzzled what to do with my daughter.' A few weeks later he ended the perplexity by sending the child to the convent, where she died in the following year, after living happily and to the considerable improvement of her temper for something more than twelve months under the gentle discipline of the nuns, who made a pet of the little girl, and seem in everything to have acted well by her. That the Shelleys, differing from Claire on the subject, regarded this disposal of the child as about the best temporary arrangement that could be made for her custody and training at a moment of disorder and uncertainty, is shown by Byron's letter to Shelley (April 26, 1821) and by the account given of the child's appearance and treatment at the convent, in the recently published passages of Shelley's letters from Ravenna to his wife. 'It is gratifying to me,' Byron wrote to his friend in April, 'that you and Mrs. Shelley do not disapprove of the step which I have taken, which is merely temporary.' Shelley's



description of the child's looks and behaviour, when he saw the little girl for about three hours at her convent in August, is the more noteworthy because the favourable report (touched-in the more pleasantly out of tenderness for poor Claire, whom it was designed to comfort) is consistent with the less agreeable accounts given of her by Hoppner and Byron himself. With her curling hair falling in beautiful profusion about her neck, and a slight figure whose effect was heightened by singular grace of movement and carriage, Allegra, 'prettily dressed in white muslin and an apron of black silk with trousers,' raced about the convent with the poet, who had often nursed her in her earliest infancy; showed him her little bed, her dinner chair, and the *carrozzina* in which she and her playmates drew one another about in the garden; prattled to him of holy saints and the dear *Bambino*; and made a comical stir throughout the whole college by ringing violently at the big bell, some few minutes before the appointed time for the nuns to leave their beds. 'The tocsin of the convent,' Shelley wrote to his wife, 'sounded, and it required all the efforts of the prioress to prevent the spouses of God from rendering themselves, dressed or undressed, to the accustomed signal. Nobody scolds her for these *scappature*, so I suppose she is well treated as far as temper is concerned.' There can be no doubt of the kindness with which the little parlour-boarder of the convent was treated by the nuns, who regarded her none the less tenderly because Byron paid them double fees for her entertainment and instruction. But though Byron had determined to have her trained to womanhood in the Catholic faith, it was not his intention that she should remain at Bagna Cavallo till her education was completed. It was only because he could not find a suitable seminary for her near Pisa, that he relinquished his purpose of taking her with him to Tuscany.

Leaving Ravenna early on the twenty-ninth morning of October, Byron met his old school-mate, Lord Clare, on the road between Imola and Bologna,—an interview of five minutes, that 'annihilated for a moment all the years between the present time and the days of Harrow,' and gave the two men a brief renewal of boyish emotion. This casual meeting on the public road was followed soon by the poet's meeting at Bologna, after five years of severance, with Sam Rogers, who wrote in the third of the following years, when news from Missolonghi had darkened most English homes, and filled most English breasts with concern,—

'Much had passed  
Since last we parted; and those five short years—  
Much had they told! His clustering locks were turn'd  
Grey; nor did aught recall the youth that swam



From Sestos to Abydos. Yet his voice,  
 Still it was sweet ; still from his eye the thought  
 Flash'd lightning-like, nor lingered on the way,  
 Waiting for words. Far, far into the night  
 We sat, conversing—no unwelcome hour,  
 The hour we met ; and, when Aurora rose,  
 Rising, we climb'd the rugged Appennine.'

Crossing the Appennines with the poet of 'Italy,' Byron visited the Florence Gallery with the same companion. On the 3rd of November he was writing letters from his new home,—the Palazzo Lanfranchi in the Lung' Arno of Pisa.

With the discretion and justice that characterize his 'Life of Lord Byron' (an enterprise of many difficulties for an English writer, and an especially arduous undertaking for a foreigner), Dr. Karl Elze calls attention to the poet's neglect, during his sojourn at Ravenna, to interest himself in the historical relics and recollections of a city so singularly rich in monuments and memories of some of the most momentous incidents and vicissitudes of human affairs. Whilst the poetry, that flowed from his pen from the beginning of 1820 to the November of the following year, betrays a puzzling indifference to these sources of interest, his letters and journals exhibit the same disregard for the very matters that would certainly have engaged much of his attention had Hobhouse been at his side. But we cannot concur with an excellent biographer in thinking that Byron's life at Ravenna 'was not only regular but monotonous.' When he is at full work, a man of letters necessarily spends most of his days in uneventful routine. He rises from bed to read and write, and when he has wearied himself by writing and reading, he goes again to bed. With brief intervals of relaxation from labour, for meals and needful exercise, this is the ordinary existence of a man of studious pursuits and literary devotion. Days so spent may afford little wherewith to brighten the pages of a diary ; but far from being monotonous, they may abound in various and vivid excitements. It was so with Byron, who never lived more rapidly and brightly than he did in the little city that to a tourist, without occupation, friends, or the forces by which some few and fortunate persons can make amusement for themselves anywhere, might well appear the tamest and sleepest town of southern Europe. Doubtless in Byron's time its society was narrow and provincial. Doubtless days and weeks passed, of which he had nothing to record save that he had read something, written something, dined in solitude or with a single friend, ridden in the forest, heard some music, and gossiped with Teresa Guiccioli. But excitements were not wanting to the man of adventure who in little more than a

year and ten months, acted as *cicisbeo* to a young and lovely countess, caused the lady to separate violently from her husband, made his love of her the talk of all Italy, and filling his house with political conspirators constituted himself the 'local Head Centre' (as the Fenians would say) of a revolutionary movement, that did not fail without bringing a large Austrian army into the field for its destruction. Still less is it to be supposed that vivid emotions were unknown to the poet who, in the midst of these distractions and during so short a period, wrote 'The Doge of Venice,' 'Sardanapalus,' the 'Two Foscari,' 'Cain,' and 'Heaven and Earth'; began 'Werner' and 'The Deformed Transformed'; and whilst producing this remarkable series of dramatic works found leisure also to produce the fifth Canto of 'Don Juan,' the 'Prophecy of Dante' and the 'Vision of Judgment,' besides translating the episode of Francesca of Rimini from Dante's 'Inferno' and the 'Morgante Maggiore' of Pulci. Conceive the activity and agitations of the mind that was pouring upon mankind such a strong stream of stirring and various thought. To speak of monotony in connection with such a mind, during the period of its greatest activity and exuberance, is to provoke a smile. The sum of the work, its vigour, profuseness, and diversity are so marvellous even to incredibility, that sceptics will arise to declare it absolutely impossible for single unaided brain to have yielded so much literature of extraordinary excellence on so many different subjects in so brief a term, when it was also stirred in separate fields of action by the excitements of love, conspiracy, and ambition. To account for an industry so incessant and astoundingly prolific under circumstances so unfavourable to meditation and creative effort, the reader must bear in mind Byron's remarkable faculty of withdrawing his intellectual powers from matters that were occasioning him the most intense excitement. All through the earliest period of his domestic troubles, from the commencement of the quarrel with Lady Byron to the final act of separation, he occupied himself with literary labour. At Ravenna he had his pen in his hand all through the excitements coming to him for Teresa's suit for a decree of separation from her husband, and was surprised he could not settle to his work of turning off verses, in the few days when he was expecting war to break out at any moment in Romagna. 'For several days,' he wrote in his diary on January 31, 1821, 'I have not written anything except a few answers to letters. In momentary expectation of an explosion of some kind, it is not easy to settle down to the desk for the higher kinds of composition. I could do it, to be sure, for, last summer,

I wrote my drama in the very bustle of Madame la Contessa G——'s divorce and all its process of accompaniments. At the same time, I also had the news of the loss of an important lawsuit in England. But these were only private and personal business; the present is of a different nature.'

Though the regular industry, temperance in diet, and comparatively wholesome excitements of his life at Ravenna had resulted in a great improvement of his health, it may not be inferred from Shelley's flattering view of his friend's condition, that Byron had recovered all the constitutional stamina, which he had squandered so recklessly at Venice. More than once he suffered at Ravenna from violent attacks of the old indigestion. Though better and much more under his command, his temper was still liable to exacerbations and outbreaks of fury, that were chiefly referable to disease of body. One of the concluding incidents of his sojourn in the Romagna was the slight attack in October of malarial fever (yet another attack of the insidious enemy that had its final triumph at Missolonghi). Nor may it be inferred from what has been said of his better habits that Byron (though 'becoming,' to use Shelley's words, 'what he should be, a virtuous man,') had completely weaned himself from the vicious practices that were the chief cause of his reputation for libertinism. It is dismally significant of his sense of inability to withhold himself from a particular form of sensuality, that he entreated Shelley to stay longer at Ravenna, to save him in the Guiccioli's absence from falling back into his evil mode of life. Other and direct evidence of the same moral instability may be found in the letter he wrote to Moore on the 1st of October. He still took laudanum at least so often and freely, that the practice of taking it must still be regarded as one of the several conditions prejudicial to his health. In January 1821, he wrote in his diary, 'Took a glass of grog, after having ridden hard in rainy weather, and scribbled, and scribbled again, the spirits (at least mine) need a little exhilaration, *and I don't like laudanum now as I used to do*:'—a note indicating pernicious familiarity with the poison. Touching his experience of the same preparation of the narcotic drug he writes on October 6, 1821, to Moore, 'Laudanum has a similar effect; but I can take much of it without any effect at all.' He still used aperient medicine, not only to preserve himself from fatness and correct the old morbid disposition to obesity, but for the sake of the excitation coming to the brain from the irritation of the lining membrane of the stomach. 'The thing,' he writes to Moore in the letter just quoted, 'that gives me the highest spirits (it seems absurd) is a dose of salts—I mean in the after-



noon, after their effect. But one can't take them like champagne.' It follows that the poet's restoration of health was far from perfect. On no system of treatment could his health have been altogether regained; and the system he pursued in this season of comparative virtue was in many respects hurtful to the physical forces. Having carried to Ravenna an irreparably shaken constitution, he went to Pisa with the shattered constitution somewhat amended.

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## CHAPTER XXII.

### PISA.

Byron's Friends at Pisa and Genoa—Their Views of and Books about Him—His Appearance, Costume, and Habits—Letter from Mr. Sheppard of Frome—The Poet relents towards his Wife—Lady Noel's Death—Byron's consequent Enrichment—Allegra's Death—The Pistol Club—The Affair with the Trooper—The Fracas at Montenero—Difficulties with the Government—Shelley's Death—The Hunts in Italy—Leigh Hunt's Disappointment and Byron's Annoyance—Migration to Genoa.

WHEN he crossed the peninsula from Ravenna to Pisa, with seven servants, five carriages, nine horses, a bull-dog, a mastiff, two cats, and a lot of poultry (the description of the poet's travelling train given by Medwin, whose accuracy in certain details of the matter was impugned by Fletcher), Byron was within two years and eight months of his death. On entering the marble halls and climbing the marble staircase of the Casa Lanfranchi in the Lung' Arno of Pisa, the palace of haunted chambers whose ghosts outnumbered his liveried retainers, the poet was within a year and nine months of his departure from Italy for the Isles of Greece. Of this concluding term of his long sojourn in Italy, the first eleven months were spent at Pisa (with the exception of the few weeks of the summer of 1822, which he passed in villegiatura at Montenero, a suburb of Leghorn). During the remainder of the period Byron had for his abode the Villa Saluzzo, in Albaro, just outside Genoa.

Of Byron's appearance, state of health, temper, and way of living at Pisa, Montenero, and Genoa, there are sources of abundant information; for at all three places he lived under the observation of some one or more than one of a group of persons, who studying him attentively to the best of their lights wrote of him freely in letters and memoirs, that have long been in the world's hands;—Tom Medwin (the perplexing simpleton), the Shelleys (nicely observant and generously critical), Leigh

Hunt (hypochondriacal and bilious), Trelawny (the well-set gentleman of the world, alternately shrewd and sympathetic), the Williamses (amiable but superficial), West (the American painter, keen and kindly after the manner of Americans), Lady Blessington (the frivolous 'beauty' of sentiment and fashion), and Teresa Guiccioli, who, abundantly communicative about the poet to Moore, lived to be voluminously garrulous about her 'Bairon' in her prosperous old age. The difficulty, however, of dealing with the evidence of such a multitude of witnesses is not great because there is no reason to question the sincerity of any one of them, with the single exception of Teresa Guiccioli, —whose thoroughly feminine and rather pleasant vanity made her ambitious of figuring in history as Byron's 'preserving angel,' and disposed her to rearrange and colour matters into accordance with so flattering a view of her relation and importance to the poet.

With the exception of the Shelleys and Teresa Guiccioli, none of these persons knew much of the man, whose greatness endowed his mere acquaintances with interest and celebrity. Medwin (whilom an officer of the 24th Light Dragoons, and author of 'Ahasuerus the Wanderer') was so foolish a creature that he would not have known Byron, had he lived sociably with the poet for twenty years instead of a few months, and had the poet throughout the whole time condescended to treat him seriously, instead of regarding him as an amiable absurdity. Leigh Hunt knew little of Byron in London; and in Italy he was so worn with hypochondria, and stung with paltry annoyances, and fretted by sordid grievances and mean vexations, as to be incapable of seeing anything but the worst side and pettiest weaknesses of the disdainful and niggardly patron, who was by the way at great pains to make the peevish and bankrupt *littérateur* think ill of him. Lady Blessington's opportunities for knowing the poet were only those which he afforded her, when he came to her Genoese *salon* (sometimes with a copy of verses for her in his hand) to gossip sentimentally with her about his domestic troubles, and to show her that Lady Caroline Lamb's darling poet still knew how to humour a woman of wit and fashion. West's opportunities for studying the poet at Montenero and Pisa were merely those of a young portrait-painter, so fortunate as to get 'sittings' from the man of world-covering fame;—and the young artist made the most of them.

A far superior person to Tom Medwin (the well-mannered noodle), and Taaffe (the Irish blockhead, for whose precious commentary on the '*Divina Commedia*' Byron exerted himself to find a publisher, before the commentator's bad horsemanship

put his patron in conflict with the Tuscan Government), Edward John Trelawny, no doubt, was for a brief while on terms of familiarity with Byron, and, studying the poet within certain lines to good purpose, produced a valuable and not ungenerous portraiture of him. Well born and well bred, tall and athletic, a man of strong eyes, beetling brows, fine aquiline profile, and heavy dark moustache, Trelawny had the air of distinction and the show of adventurous capacity, that never failed to command the respect of the poet who rated men of action much higher than bookworms and men of the desk. To Byron this gentleman of the world was, also, none the less respectable for the gifts of fortune, greatly exceeding the ordinary means of younger sons, which enabled him to keep good horses and play the part of a gentleman-at-large in a dignified manner. But though he liked him and even honoured him for his manifest courage and stalwart manliness, Byron never showed Trelawny the finer and higher forces of his intellect and nature. Companions in swimming and riding, competitors at pistol-practice and fellow-voyagers (on excellent terms) from Genoa to Argostoli, they were mere men of the world and society to one another. 'His conversation,' Trelawny says of his friend, 'was anything but literary except when Shelley was present.' Instead of talking poetry to the man of Cornish breed, Byron entertained him with anecdotes of great actors, on and off the stage, boxers, gamblers, duellists, drunkards; garnishing the gossip with the 'towny' slang and flippancies, that were the fashion in London when 'Childe Harold' was new literature, and the betting was even whether or no Miss Milbanke would become Lady Byron. Regarding poets and their doings very much as Colonel Newcome regarded them, Trelawny was not a person to whom Byron could have talked about his art. Moreover, though they were thrown together under circumstances that speedily change casual acquaintances to intimate friends, the two men were together for no more than fourteen of the thirty months that intervened between Byron's coming to Pisa and his death at Missolonghi.

Having rendered himself famous from his early manhood by being in at the successive deaths of the two greatest poets of the nineteenth century, during a brief term of foreign touring, it is not wonderful that Trelawny, in his old age, having no stronger claims to social consideration, made the most he honestly could of the period during which he had known Byron and Shelley, and of the friendship they felt for him. 'I knew Shelley the last year of his life, and Byron the last three years of his life. I was on the most intimate terms with both, and saw them almost every day,' Trelawny wrote in March 1878,—using words



that have caused persons to infer that he was in almost daily intercourse with the one poet *for* an entire year, and with the other *for* three full years. Making the acquaintance of both poets after his coming to Pisa at the beginning of 1822, he saw much of Shelley from the commencement of their intercourse to the day of the poet's death (July 8, 1822),—in all for a period of six months and two or three days. Introduced to Byron at the beginning of January 1822, Trelawny lived on familiar terms with him till the beginning of January 1823,—the month of his departure for Rome. From that time he saw no more of the poet till the following summer, when he accompanied him from Genoa to Cephalonia, being one of the party that visited Ithaca, soon after which excursion of pleasure he bade Byron farewell at Argostoli at the end of August or on an early day of September. After parting from Byron at Cephalonia, Trelawny never again saw the poet alive. On hearing of his friend's peril from extreme illness, the adventurous gentleman hastened from Athens to Missolonghi, arriving there in time to make the famous *post-mortem* examination of the feet, that, discovering the nature of the poet's grievous infirmity, made an important contribution to the materials for the explanation of much that was most perplexing in his story. Hence it appears that Byron was within two years and four months of his death when he first took Trelawny by hand; that in 1823 Trelawny lived with the poet for no more than two months; that they never spoke to one another by word of mouth after the opening of September 1823; and that the two periods of their personal association did not together exceed a year and two months.

Of Byron's personal appearance and usual costume several particulars, for the assistance of readers who would see the poet even as he was seen of men during his stay at Pisa and Genoa, may be found in Medwin's 'Conversations,' Lady Blessington's 'Conversations,' Trelawny's 'Records,' and Hunt's spiteful but (allowance being made at every turn of the leaf for the author's jaundice) reliable record of Byronic pettinesses. Finding him much older and much thicker in the neck than Thorwaldsen's bust represents him, and altogether different from the portraits of him by the various engravers, Medwin was surprised to see in the most celebrated of living poets 'a man about five feet seven or eight, apparently forty years of age,' who resembled Milton in that 'he barely escaped being short and thick.' The greyiness and thinness of the poet's tresses were also noticed by the same chronicler of Byronic small-beer, who, after alluding to the pallor and wanness of the great man's complexion, observes that 'his hair, thin and fine, had almost become grey, and waved

in natural and graceful curls over his head, that was assimilating itself fast to the "bald first Cæsar's." Allowing the auburn-grey tresses (which curled with something of their old feathery lightness about the brow and temples) to grow at the nape of his neck to a notable length, Byron at the same time wore moustaches, 'which were not sufficiently dark to be becoming,' Trelawny has much to say in commendation of the poet's personal aspect, which 'realised that ideal standard with which imagination adorns genius.' But whilst speaking with admiration of 'his small highly-finished head and curly hair,' which 'had an airy and graceful appearance from the massiveness and length of his throat,' and no less admiringly of 'his eyes and lips' which revealed genius to every one who studied them, Trelawny (a good opinion on questions of masculine style) observes of the poet, 'His long absence had not effaced the mark John Bull brands his children with; the instant he loomed above the horizon, on foot or horseback, you saw at a glance he was a Britisher.'—A Britisher, however, of outlandish garb and details. When Leigh Hunt, after a wearying walk through hot and dusty suburbs from Leghorn to Montenero, came face to face with the peer who had dined with him years syne in Horsemonger Lane Gaol, he was slow to recognise the author of 'Childe Harold' in a fat gentleman, 'dressed in a loose nankeen jacket and white trousers, his neckcloth open, and his hair in thin ringlets about his throat: altogether presenting a very different aspect from the compact, energetic, and curly-headed person,' he had known in England. Half-an-hour later, on going forth from his hot salmon-coloured villa in the fierce sun, Byron had donned a 'loose riding-coat of mazarin blue, and a velvet cap, looking more lordly than before, but hardly less foreign.' The nankeen jacket, mazarin blue riding-coat (mentioned by Hunt), and the braided tartan (Gordon pattern) jacket, to which reference is made by Medwin and Trelawny, were favourite articles of dress with the poet, who retaining his old taste for 'white duck' trousers, was also a frequent wearer in hot weather of nankeen trousers, made loose and strapped down so as to cover the feet. The velvet cap, noticed by Hunt, Trelawny and Lady Blessington, was fitted with a broad gold band and a rich gold tassel. Except on very hot days, when he still exposed his throat to full view and free air, his practice at this period of his story was to surround his neck with a light neck-cloth, a narrow black stock, or some other easily adapted and comfortable cravat. To guard his eyes from glaring sun-light, which made him suffer from ophthalmia, he sometimes wore the blue spectacles, that appear in a description of the poet by Lady Blessington, who had occasion to observe



that his green tartan and nankeen jackets, profusely decorated with braid and buttons, were of an antiquated fashion,—‘the waist very short, the back very narrow, and the sleeves set in as they used to be ten or fifteen years before.’ The maker of these precise and feminine observations was of opinion that her visitor’s nankeen clothing had shrunk from washing.—The lady and Trelawny concur in their testimony respecting the housings of the poet’s saddle-horses. ‘At the outer door,’ says Trelawny, as good a rider and judge of horseflesh as ever came out of England, ‘we found three or four very ordinary-looking horses; they had holsters on the saddles, and many other superfluous trappings, such as the Italians delight in and Englishmen eschew. Shelley, and an Irish visitor just announced, mounted two of these sorry jades. I luckily had my own cattle.’ Lady Blessington says, ‘His horse was literally covered with various trappings; the saddle was *à la hussarde*, with holsters, in which he always carried pistols.’ In connection with what Hunt says of the poet’s fatness at Montenero, notice should be taken of what the same authority says of the change Byron soon wrought in his bulk and appearance by physic and starvation. ‘He had got fat,’ says the spiteful narrator, ‘and then went to the other extreme. He came to me one day out of another room, and said with great glee, “Look here! what do you say to this?” at the same time doubling the lapels of his coat one over the other,—“three months ago I could not button it!”’ It was thus that Byron expanded and diminished in body to the last, now swelling to fatness when he fed with ordinary freedom, and now wasting to an elegant tenuity when he stayed his keen appetite for food with opium and tobacco-juice.

Byron had been about three weeks at Pisa when he received the curious epistle from the Rev. John Sheppard of Frome, Somerset (dated November 21, 1821), enclosing a copy of the prayer which Mrs. Sheppard (the clergyman’s wife) had composed on July 31, 1814, at Hastings, for the poet’s conversion,—a prayer recently discovered amongst the papers which passed from the lady to her husband on her death in 1819. That this devout prayer for a person, alike distinguished for his transcendent talents and his neglect of God, was really composed and offered in behalf of Byron, who was staying at Hastings at the time of its composition, there is small reason to doubt. But whilst she prayed with affecting fervour for the poet, Mrs. Sheppard seems to have mistaken some other visitor at Hastings for the object of her pious solicitude, as she more than once spoke to her husband of the poet’s ‘agility on the rocks at Hastings.’ In the gracious note, with which he acknowledged



the clergyman's kindness in sending him a paper so likely to cause him emotions of solemn gratitude to the maker of the prayer, the poet observed, 'Though I am *not* quite *sure* that it was intended by the writer for *me*, yet the date, the place where it was written, with some other circumstances that you mention, render the allusion probable. But for whomever it was meant, I have read it with all the pleasure which can arise from so melancholy a topic.' Of one thing, however, Byron must have been quite *sure*,—that he was *not* the climber of rocks, whose agility had attracted the lady's attention.—Interesting for various reasons, this letter is especially noteworthy for its evidence that in 1814, whilst the storm was rising in religious circles throughout the country against the wicked poet, pious women were falling on their knees and out of their charity to sinners were beseeching God to pardon him.

Four days before the date of Mr. Sheppard's curious epistle, Byron had written a remarkable letter, with the intention of sending it to Lady Byron. Though it was withheld by the writer, and probably never came under Lady Byron's eye during his life, it is necessary to exhibit in these pages an epistle that throws light upon the relations of the separated husband and wife, and especially on his feelings towards her at the commencement of his residence at Pisa.

Communication between Lady Byron and her husband had not altogether ceased since the poet's futile overtures for reconciliation in 1816. Occasions arose when it was necessary for them to ascertain each other's views and wishes on matters of business. But as the requirements of these occasions could be satisfied by correspondence with a third party, the intercourse of the husband and wife on matters of business was usually maintained through the agents employed for the management of their private affairs. At the same time Byron received intelligence of his child (Ada) through Mrs. Leigh, whose letters sometimes contained information that was inspired, if not directly dictated, by her brother's wife. On rare occasions, however, Byron wrote directly to his wife; and at least on one occasion Lady Byron wrote directly to him.

Whilst Byron was lingering at Venice in November 1819, in the state of vacillation so happily described by Hoppner, making preparations for an immediate return to England whilst he awaited intelligence from Ravenna, his mind often busied itself with a remarkable communication, that offered him a prospect of reconcilment with his wife. The poet's old friend, Mr. Wedderburn Webster (afterwards Sir James Webster Wedderburn), had written him a letter of reasons for thinking

that a reunion might be brought about between Ada's parents. What the reasons were does not appear. Whether Mr. Wedderburn Webster wrote of his own mere motion, or at the suggestion of some person acting with or without authority from Lady Byron, does not appear. It is, however, inconceivable that this old and staunch friend to the poet's interests would have stirred in the delicate business without good grounds for a strong opinion that he would stir to good purpose. So confident and urgent was Mr. Wedderburn Webster in the matter, that on receiving an unsatisfactory answer to the letter of reasons, he wrote again to the poet, urging him to seize the opportunity for returning to his wife and his proper place in society. All that is known to the writer of this page about this distressingly suggestive correspondence may be found in Letter 376 of Moore's 'Life,' in which Byron, dating from Ravenna, June 1, 1820, writes to his future biographer these words,—‘I have received a Parisian letter from W. W., which I prefer answering through you, if that worthy be still in Paris, and, as he says, an occasional visitor of yours. In November last he wrote to me a well-meaning letter, stating, for some reasons of his own, his belief that a reunion might be effected between Lady B. and myself. To this I answered as usual; and he sent me a second letter, repeating his notions, which letter I have never answered, having had a thousand other things to think of. He now writes as if he believed that he had offended me by touching on the topic; and I wish you to assure him that I am not at all so,—but, on the contrary, obliged by his good nature. At the same time acquaint him *the thing is impossible*. You know this, as well as I.’ A more unfortunate moment for Wedderburn Webster's third letter could not have been chosen, than the season when Byron was in the full bustle of Teresa Guiccioli's suit for separation from her husband, respecting which matter Byron is copiously communicative in the remainder of his letter to Moore. It should be observed that Mr. Wedderburn Webster was no mere busybody, and that Byron (given to free speech about his friends, when they gave him unpalatable counsel) does not suggest that the gentleman was pushing himself into a quarrel of which he could not know the truth on both sides. The fair inference is that in November 1819, when he was almost as strongly disposed to go to England as to Ravenna, Byron saw a fair opening to a reconciliation with his wife, and that Teresa Guiccioli was the evil influence who lured him from the course that might have restored him to his wife's affections and to English society. This is matter for consideration to those who, taking Teresa at her own valuation on

Moore's letters of credence, have extolled her as the generous creature who, with sublime disregard for her own interests, sacrificed herself to save Byron.

Having given Moore the 'Memoirs' in October 1819, and appointed him the biographer of the Memorialist, Byron with no more than proper consideration for his wife's feelings and reputation wrote to her on January 1, 1820, offering to submit to her perusal the autobiographic narrative, in order that it should be relieved through her suggestions of any faults of inaccuracy or unfairness to her, of which he had been guilty. To this epistle, Lady Byron writing straight to her husband made this answer,—

‘*Kirkby Mallory, March 10, 1820.*

‘I received your letter of January, offering to my perusal a Memoir of part of your life. I decline to inspect it. I consider the publication or circulation of such a composition at any time as prejudicial to Ada's future happiness. For my own sake, I have no reason to shrink from publication; but, notwithstanding the injuries which I have suffered, I should lament some of the *consequences*.

‘A. BYRON.’

To which letter Byron after a day's consideration made the following reply:—

‘*Ravenna, April 3, 1820.*

‘I received yesterday your answer, dated March 10. My offer was an honest one, and surely could only be construed as such even by the most malignant casuistry. I could answer you, but it is too late, and it is not worth while. To the mysterious menace of the last sentence, whatever its import may be—and I cannot pretend to unriddle it—I could hardly be very sensible even if I understood it, as, before it can take place, I shall be where “nothing can touch him further.” . . . I advise you, however, to anticipate the period of your intention, for, be assured, no power of figures will avail beyond the present; and if it could, I would answer with the Florentine,

“Ed io, che posto son con loro in croce  
e certo  
La fiera moglie, più ch' altro, mi nuoce.”

Each of these letters is deficient in perspicuity towards the end; the epistle from Lady Byron affording the larger field for conjecture. She may have only meant, by the concluding clause of her last sentence, that although her sufferings had rendered her callous to affliction and comparatively indifferent to fresh annoyances, she should regret the consequences of the



threatened publication on her child's character and happiness. She may, however, have intended to intimate that, if his version of the story of their differences should be published, she would publish her version of them, from the commencement of his ill-treatment of her to his liaison with Jane Clermont, and that, notwithstanding her large grounds for resentment, she should be sorry to do his character so considerable an injury. Byron, who had formerly suspected her of nursing a purpose to vindicate herself at his expense after his death, seems to have put this interpretation on her words. It was a part of Mrs. Beecher Stowe's indiscretion to insist that Lady Byron had suffered wrong which certainly was never committed, and that the contingent menace of her letter was to publish to her husband's infamy the morbid fancy, that did not enter her troubled mind, till years had passed slowly over his grave. But of Mrs. Stowe and her book of blunders, the less said the better.

Though he had small reason to expect that his letter of January 1, 1820, would draw a conciliatory reply from his wife, Byron was not without excuse for annoyance at the temper and tone of her answer. The chagrin her note occasioned him was not diminished by his vexation at the refusal of her Trustees to lend the money on mortgage to Lord Blessington. More than once during his sojourn at Ravenna he spoke and wrote of his wife resentfully,—albeit with an anger less scorching than his previous outbreaks of rage against her. On December 10, 1820, in his fury at reading in a newspaper of her consent to be a patroness of a Charity Ball, he threw off the set of verses, opening with,

‘What matter the pangs of a husband and father,  
If his sorrows in exile be great or be small,  
So the Pharisee's glories around her she gather,  
And the Saint patronises her “Charity Ball.”

‘What matters—a heart, which though faulty was feeling,  
Be driven to excesses which once would appal—  
That the Sinner would suffer is only fair dealing,  
As the Saint keeps her charity back for “the Ball.”’

Withholding these intemperate verses from the press, Byron also kept back the peevish letter he wrote for his wife's eye on the 1st of March, 1821, touching the insecurity of English funds and the injury done him by her Trustees. Dated from Ravenna, the letter of scant courtesy and much vehement rudeness begins,

‘I have received your message, through my sister's letter, about English security, &c., &c. It is considerate (and true,

even) that such is to be found—but not that I shall find it. Mr. ——— for his own views and purposes will thwart all such attempts till he has accomplished his own' (? end), 'viz. to make me lend my fortune to some client of his choosing:—'—words chiefly noteworthy for their evidence of the way in which Lady Byron sometimes used Augusta's pen as a means of communication with her husband. Whilst the letter shows how Byron could still explode in gusty pettishness about or to his wife, the fact that he withheld the epistle indicates his growing disinclination to do anything to revive her waning resentment, and diminish his chances of eventually returning to her favour.

Valuable alike for its evidence of a relenting disposition in Lady Byron, and for its testimony to the writer's growing desire for a friendlier understanding and even perfect reconciliation with his wife, is the following withheld epistle which he intended to send her, under cover to Mrs. Leigh,—the letter to which reference was made on a previous page, as having been written four days before the date of Mr. Sheppard's epistle from Frome, Somerset,—

*'Pisa, November 17, 1821.*

'I have to acknowledge the receipt of "Ada's hair," which is very soft and pretty, and nearly as dark already as mine was at twelve years old, if I may judge from what I recollect of some in Augusta's possession, taken at that age. But it don't curl,—perhaps from its being let grow.

'I also thank you for the inscription of the date and name, and I will tell you why;—I believe that they are the only two or three words of your handwriting in my possession. For your letters I returned, and except the two words, or rather the one word "Household," written twice in an old account book, I have no other. I burnt your last note, for two reasons:—firstly, it was written in a style not very agreeable; and, secondly, I wished to take your word without documents, which are the worldly resources of suspicious people.

'I suppose that this note will reach you somewhere about Ada's birthday—the 10th December, I believe. She will then be six, so that in about twelve more I shall have some chance of meeting her;—perhaps sooner, if I am obliged to go to England by business or otherwise. Recollect, however, one thing, either in distance or nearness:—every day which keeps us asunder should, after so long a period, rather soften our mutual feelings, which must always have one rallying point as long as our child exists, which I presume we both hope will be long after either of her parents.

'The time which has elapsed since the separation has been

considerable, more than the whole brief period of our union, and the not much longer one of our prior acquaintance. We both made a bitter mistake ; but now it is over, and irrevocably so. For, at thirty-three on my part, and a few years less on yours, though it is no very extended period of life, still it is one when the habits and thought are generally so formed as to admit of no modification ; and as we could not agree when younger, we should with difficulty do so now.

‘ I say all this, because I own to you, that, notwithstanding everything, I considered our reunion as not impossible for more than a year after the separation :—but I then gave up the hope entirely and for ever. But this very impossibility of reunion seems to me a reason why, on all the few points of discussion which can arise between us, we should preserve the courtesies of life, and as much of its kindness as people who are never to meet may preserve perhaps more easily than nearer connexions. For my own part, I am violent, but not malignant ; for only fresh provocations can awaken my resentments. To you, who are colder and more concentrated, I would just hint, that you may sometimes mistake the depth of cold anger for dignity, and a worse feeling for duty. I assure you that I bear you *now* (whatever I may have done) no resentment whatever. Remember, that *if you have injured me* in aught, this forgiveness is something ; and that if I have *injured you*, it is something more still, if it be true, as the moralists say, that the most offending are the least forgiving.

‘ Whether the offence has been solely on my side, or reciprocal, or on yours chiefly, I have ceased to reflect on any but two things—viz. that you are the mother of my child, and that we shall never meet again. I think if you also consider the two corresponding points with reference to myself, it will be better for all three.

‘ Yours ever,

‘ NOEL BYRON.’

Byron’s reasons for withholding this carefully composed letter are obvious. Whilst certain of its most incisive sentences would of themselves defeat his purpose, its tone throughout was little calculated to further the object he had in view. His purpose was to win the slightly relenting woman into such a correspondence with him as might result in a friendly arrangement of their differences, if not in a renewal of domestic association. Working for this end he did well to forbear from asking too much of her returning benignity, and did ill in asserting so precisely that it was not to be conceived they could ever meet again



as friends. On reconsideration he must have felt that his wife's resentment would be stirred by the suggestion that she had been as much to blame as he. Lady Byron was the very woman to rise in war against the hint—a sufficiently plain ‘hint,’ it must be admitted—that she was less conscientious than vindictive, less swayed by proper care for her dignity than by the impulses of a cold anger. It is not wonderful that he refrained from posting a letter so certain to incense the woman he wished to appease. On the other hand, when he wished to show her precisely how he felt to his wife, it was natural for him to show Lady Blessington so honest a picture of his feelings. The theorists, who insist that the letter was written only to be shown to his own advantage and Lady Byron's corresponding disadvantage, overlook the fact that, instead of placing the writer in a favourable light and making him figure as a man of an amiable and forgiving disposition, the epistle shows him wanting in generous placability and abounding in some of the qualities that are most likely to engender contention between man and wife. The document is most interesting and valuable as a sincere expression of the feelings of the man who, much though he yearned for reconciliation and the social advantages that would attend it, was still too much heated by the embers of smouldering resentments, to be capable of taking the right measures for the attainment of his desire. The epistle is also very interesting for its evidence of Lady Byron's disposition towards her husband. She had sent him a lock of their child's hair; with her own hand she had written the date, to remind him of the time when

‘The child of love,—though born in bitterness,  
And nurtured in convulsion,’

had come to them. The mother who did this thing was on the way to become the wife who would invite her husband to return to her for their child's sake,—ay, and for her own sake.

All the biographers give the same account of Byron's life at Pisa, which resembling his life at Ravenna in the hours of rising and going to rest, the hours for light meals and strenuous labour with the pen, the time allotted to horse-exercise, pistol-practice, and Teresa's society, differed from it chiefly in the substitution of the milder excitement of social intercourse with his small circle of English friends for the fierce agitations of political conspiracy. In some respects (indeed in every respect, with the exception of his studious and literary pursuits) it was a loitering, indolent life. Trelawny was justified in speaking of the ‘lazy, dawdling habits’ that distinguished the poet's way of living wherever he tarried, notwithstanding his industry at

the desk, and the marvellous fertility of his pen. Seldom leaving his bed before noon, he breakfasted after a careful toilet, if a single cup of very strong green tea—drunk from the medium-sized breakfast-cup in the possession of Dr. Diamond of Twickenham House, Twickenham,—may be called a breakfast. He usually stood, whilst taking the tea, which was served for him without sugar or milk. Sometimes an egg was beaten into the tea, in the manner of ‘a flip;’ and sometimes he ate the yolk of an egg raw; but it was more usual for the refreshment to consist solely of the unsweetened drink. At two o’clock in the wintry seasons, at three o’clock when the days were long, he lunched off biscuit and soda-water. At three o’clock or four o’clock, after playing a game or two of billiards (playing it unscientifically and almost at random), with any friend or friends who came to spend the afternoon with him, he entered his carriage and drove to the spot outside the town where his riding-horses awaited him. In the saddle he ‘sauntered along the road’ (Trelawny’s expression), with his mounted friends about him,—making leisurely way, in the earlier months of his sojourn at Pisa, to the Cascine and the pine-forests stretching towards the sea; in the later months of the period, to the farmhouse (several miles outside the town) where he and his friends spent half-an-hour in pistol-practice at a target, placed in the garden of the Podere for their convenience. Expert (notwithstanding the unsteadiness of his nervous hand) at a sport, that had been a favourite pastime with him from his boyhood, he showed a boyish delight, whenever he made an unusually good shot. On the other hand, when he made a bad shot, or still worse was distinctly surpassed by a competitor, he evinced his mortification, like a vain woman who has been beaten at chess by a player of her own sex. One of the attractions to this farmhouse was the handsome daughter of the establishment,—the brunette beauty, with whom the poet used to gossip with piquant freedom, and of whose charms Teresa Guiccioli heard with an uneasiness she had neither the good sense nor sense of dignity to conceal. The men who attended Byron on these visits to the brunette bower were the members of his Pistol Club, whom (with sublime indifference for ‘the inflammation of his weekly bills’) he used to entertain at the dinner-parties (for a while, as often as once a-week), when he had for his guests—Shelley, Medwin, Trelawny, Taaffe, Williams, and the two Gambas (father and son). The horse-exercise and pistol-practice of the afternoon were succeeded on ordinary days at seven o’clock by the solitary and meagre meal, at which the poet sometimes for days together took nothing but vegetables. At



nine o'clock he visited Count Gamba's household ; after which he returned to the Palazzo Lanfranchi, to work at ' Don Juan ' or read till two or three o'clock in the morning, when he went (says Trelawny) ' to bed, often feverish, restless, and exhausted—to dream, as he said, more than to sleep.' One of the few slips of a good book, that contains so few mistakes, may be found on the page where Dr. Elze says that from the commencement of the poet's residence at Pisa, Teresa Guiccioli lived with him again under the same roof. At the Villa Rossa of Montenero, where her father was also a visitor, she resided in the same house with the poet ; and she stayed for a brief while at the Palazzo Lanfranchi after her father and brother had been expelled from Tuscany ; but her open and avowed domiciliation with Byron, after her separation from her husband, began at Albaro, outside Genoa.

Byron was still in the fourth month of his residence at Pisa, when Lady Noel died in England,—an event that, by removing the person whom the poet regarded as the chief cause of his separation from Lady Byron and the chief obstacle to their reunion, must have encouraged those hopes of eventual reconciliation to his wife, which (notwithstanding his countless assertions to the contrary) were never utterly extinguished in his breast. Liberated from the domination of her mother's imperious will, Lady Byron would now feel the need of her husband's society and protecting care, and at the same time encounter no opposition to her growing tenderness. The wife, who a few months since had sent him the lock of their child's hair, would now soon invite the child's father to return and lay his hand on the head, from which the hair was cut. There is no direct evidence of words that Byron entertained this hope ; but that he took this view of the position is a fair inference from certain facts. That Sir Ralph Noel (Milbanke) was still alive would not militate against this hope within the breast of the poet, who was probably unaware how urgent the baronet had been for the separation, and had contrived to persuade himself that his father-in-law was at heart on his side of the quarrel in 1816.—The Wentworth property having devolved on Lady Byron and her husband at Lady Noel's death, Byron lost no time in appointing Sir Francis Burdett to act as his referee and arbitrator for the apportionment between himself and his wife, of the revenue from the estate, ' estimated at 7000*l.* a-year.' At the same time, he instructed his lawyers to obtain the royal license for his assumption of ' the name and arms, which ' (as he writes to Moore on February 28, 1822) ' it seems I am to endue.' Referring to the clerical outcry against ' Cain,' he had written to his future biographer on the 19th of



February, 1822, 'There is (if I am not mistaken) some good Church preferment on the Wentworth estates; and I will show them what a good Christian I am, by patronising and preferring the most pious of their order, should opportunity occur.' Thus it was that, within two years and two months of his death, George Gordon Byron became George Gordon Noel Byron, and henceforth signed his letters with the initials N.B.—the initial letters (as he remarked) of Napoleon-Buonaparte and Ncta-Bene. It has already been remarked that he was under no obligation of honour to decline taking his share of the yearly revenue of the property, for which he had paid a heavy price in money, dishonour, and discomfort. It is strange that whilst so many voices have condemned Byron for taking the pecuniary benefit coming to him from his wife's estate—a benefit that he enjoyed for only two years—no one has ever suggested that Lady Byron should have declined the enrichment that came to her from his marriage-settlement on her, for more than thirty-five years.

One has not far to seek for Byron's reason for taking the income. The money was his; he liked money; therefore he took the money that was his by bargain and purchase, and no more pertained to his wife morally or legally, than that portion of his interest in his own inheritance, which he had assigned to trustees for her advantage, remained either morally or legally in him. It would have been strange had he done otherwise, when he had been for years working and hoarding to get together enough money for the realisation of one or another of his dreams of material advantage,—the acquisition of an island in the Levant, or a big sweep of land in South America, with two or three good silver mines, to repay him the usance of his moneys. 'I want,' he said to Trelawny, 'a sum of money independent of income, 30,000*l.* will do—10,000*l.* I have—to buy a principality in one of the South American States—Chili or Peru. Lady Hester Stanhope's way of life in Syria would just suit my humour.' The money from the Wentworth property might help to compass one or another of these projects. It would have strengthened his hands for an ambitious game in Greece, had events favoured the personal ambition that carried him thither. Moreover, nursing the hope of eventual reconciliation to his wife, whilst he was in no humour to abate, he saw the imprudence of foregoing, aught of the rights and privileges of his marital position, which he had not relinquished by the deed of separation.

Lady Noel's death was followed, after an interval of something more than two months, by the death of Allegra, under circumstances already set forth;—an event that must have touched

Byron the more acutely, because the child was sent to the convent, where she caught the fatal fever, in contemptuous disregard of Claire's feelings and vehement protestations. On recovering from the first shock of his grief for the loss of the child, he said to Teresa Guiccioli, 'She is more fortunate than we are; besides, her position in the world would scarcely have allowed her to be happy. It is God's will—let us mention it no more.' His sorrow for the child does not, however, seem to have been attended with compassion or any revival of tenderness for the child's mother. To Claire he appears to have been unrelenting to the last. Though he was compelled to acquit Shelley of the immorality referred to in a previous chapter, he seems to have remained under the impression that Jane Clermont had given birth to a second child. Writing from Pisa on December 10, 1821, to Murray, he said, 'My *mother*, my *wife*, my *daughter*, my *half-sister*, my *sister's mother*, my *natural daughter*, (as far at least as I am concerned,) and *myself*, are all *only children*.' He would scarcely have inserted the parenthetical words after the reference to his natural daughter, had he thought Allegra her mother's only child. He certainly would not have inserted them had he believed Jane Clermont incapable of erring with another man, even as she had erred with him. This unfavourable opinion of Claire is not to be lost sight of, when Byron is judged for his neglect of the mother at the time of the child's death, and his omission to make any provision in his will for the needy woman whom he had injured grievously.

Partly through misadventure, but chiefly from his want of proper consideration for the sensibilities and difficulties of the government under whose protection he was living, Byron found himself in an irritating embroilment with the Tuscan authorities, at the very moment of his keenest anxiety and sorrow for Allegra. On the 24th of March, 1822, he was returning to the town on horseback, with several mounted members of his Pistol Club about him, and in his rear a carriage containing Teresa Guiccioli and Mrs. Shelley, when a serjeant-major (or corporal, according to another account) of dragoons rode roughly through the cavalcade, to the discomfiture of Taafe, the Irish bore and absurd commentator, whose horse shying abruptly out of the dragoon's way nearly unseated a very *maladroit* equestrian. To divert attention from his bad riding the Irishman, who had lost his temper and stirrup at the same moment, exclaimed to Byron, 'Shall we endure this man's insolence?' Instead of replying, like a humourist, that he was thankful for the *contretemps* which had afforded him so good an example of his companion's horsemanship, Byron, rising to rage in an



instant, and crying aloud, 'No, we will bring him to account! put his horse to the gallop, and in another moment was in pursuit of the offensive trooper, with the Pistol Club militant at his heels. The poet and the trooper were through the gate before the guards could interfere; but whilst the soldier was clattering up the Lung 'Arno, with his pursuer gaining upon him at every stride, Shelley and the other members of the club were having a ruffle with the soldiers at the gate, who had turned out with muskets and bayonets to breast the foaming flood of chivalry. After throwing a glove with divers hot words at the serjeant-major, under the notion that the fellow was an officer of superior quality whom a nobleman might challenge to a duel, Byron rode back to the gate, to find Shelley bleeding from a sabre-cut on the head, and Taafe (the originator of the row) keeping at a safe distance from the fray, alike to the indignation and contemptuous amusement of the ladies in the carriage. The most serious incident of the rather absurd affair was that, as he galloped past the Palazzo Lanfranchi after the glove had been hurled at him, the trooper was stabbed with a stable-fork by one of Byron's servants, who rushing out from the mansion gave him an ugly 'dig' in the ribs with the scarcely martial weapon. It says much for the disaffection of the populace to their rulers, that no one came forth to identify the perpetrator of this violent deed, done in broad daylight and in the presence of half-a-hundred excited people, and that the blind beggars of the Lung 'Arno, hearing the English were unarmed, sidled up to some of them, and gave them formidable stilettoes, taken from the sleeves of ragged gaberdines. Responsible for the order of such a populace, the police had reason to think gravely of the disturbance, which had given the trooper on duty a wound that might prove fatal. The hubbub was succeeded by an official inquiry, that must have disposed the Tuscan Government to wish Lord Byron well away from Pisa with his pistol-shooting friends and his turbulent servants. Three months later (at the end of June or the beginning of July), when Byron and the Gambas were in villegiatura at Montenero, the attention of the Leghorn police was called to another disturbance, in which the young Count Gamba had been stabbed by one of the poet's menials. At the same time, whilst his people were earning the disfavour of the police, Byron had neither the prudence nor the courtesy to conciliate the Grand-duke and Grand-duchess by gratifying their wish to see him at Court. Under these circumstances, it is not surprising that to rid themselves of a sojourner within their bounds, who showed them no civility whilst giving them



some trouble and more anxiety, the Tuscan authorities did precisely what the Papal agents had done twelve months since at Ravenna. Ordering the Gambas to quit Tuscan territory, with a knowledge that to avoid a convent Teresa would soon be compelled to follow her father, and with reason for thinking that Byron would soon follow, if he did not accompany, her to another asylum, the Tuscan Government at the beginning of July bade the two Counts pack their baggage and move on. The notice to quit had the desired effect. Towards the end of September 1822 (some weeks after the cremation of poor Shelley on the sand-beach of the Bay of Spezia) Byron and the Countess Guiccioli withdrew from the Palazzo Lanfranchi, and moved from Pisa to Albaro, the suburb of Genoa, where Mrs. Shelley had hired at a rent of 24*l.* a-year, for Byron and the Gambas, the Villa Saluzzo, a spacious house lying amid vineyards and olive woods, and had taken for herself and the Hunts at a rent of 20*l.* a-year, the smaller residence called the Casa Negroto, of which dwelling-place Hunt wrote, 'There were forty rooms in it, some of them such as would be considered splendid in England, and all neat and new, with borders and arabesques. The balcony and staircase were of marble; and there was a little flower-garden.' After he had settled in the Villa Saluzzo, and begun to feel at home in the new abode, Byron wrote to Murray, 'Count Gamba's family, the father and mother (? brother) and daughter, are residing with me by Mr. Hill (the minister's) recommendation, as a safer asylum from the political persecutions than they could have in another residence: but they occupy one part of a large house, and I the other, and our establishments are quite separate.'

'Genoa again! With what different feelings we beheld it the first time!' Leigh Hunt exclaims in a page of his book (so often quoted by the present writer), referring to the pleasant anticipations that animated him when he touched the port for the first time on the way to Leghorn. To apprehend the change in the litterateur's feelings, one must glance at circumstances under which he had started for Italy. For some time Byron had been hankering for a newspaper, that, powerful chiefly through his connexion with it, should be in his hands on terms that, whilst affording him all the pleasures, should exempt him from all the drudgery and other disagreeable incidents of editorial authority. The paper should be established with his money, so that he should have proprietorial authority to throw whatever he liked into its columns. For its success and his own comfort, he should require the zealous co-operation of some comrade of the

literary craft, who would throw all his heart into the enterprise for the sake of the emoluments of a joint proprietor and joint editor, entering the concern without capital. His coadjutor, besides being a facile and lively poet (for poetry would be a chief feature of the new journal), must be a notable personage of the literary guild, with power to push the paper into public favour. The paper should be bright, sunny, humorous, superlatively satirical and daring. Seeing the need of a coadjutor, for whom he had a personal liking and with whom he could work harmoniously, Byron was by no means disposed to regard poverty as a disqualification for the office. A poor man would be likely to work more resolutely than a rich coadjutor. Still benevolent, when the benevolent project promised to yield a handsome interest for invested money, Byron relished the notion of having a coadjutor whose 'fortune would be made' (as the phrase goes) by the enterprise, and who would be duly grateful to the originator of the fortune-making affair. With such an organ in his hands, the poet felt he could revive his waning popularity (or rather, the popularity that seemed to him to be waning), could repay with scathing vehemence the satire of saucy critics, and (a matter not to be overlooked) could administer seasonable chastisement to Murray, whenever that publisher should be wanting in loyalty and devotion to the poet, out of whom he was making something more than a modest fortune.

Moore was the first person to whom Byron submitted the project, together with the offer of the coadjutor's place. They must have an office, keep their names secret, and do a thing in weekly journalism that should set the Thames on fire. 'Why, man,' Byron wrote to his friend, 'if you were to take to this in good earnest, your debts would be paid in a twelvemonth . . . But you must live in London, and I also, to bring it to bear, and *we must keep it a secret*. As for the living in London, I would make that not difficult to you (if you would allow me), until we could see whether one means or other (the success of the plan, for instance) would not make it quite easy for you, as well as your family.' These words should be remembered in bare justice to the poet and journalist, to whom Byron made the offer, which Moore declined. For a short time Moore was tickled by the glittering bait, and thought of biting at it. On consideration he was too cautious even to nibble. The Irishman, who would have been called 'canny' had he been a Scotchman, was by no means deficient in caution; and he knew enough of Byron's failings, to mistrust the project, and to be certain that if he closed with the proposal he would soon lose



his friends. The bait which Moore avoided after swimming twice or thrice daintily about it, was gorged by Leigh Hunt.

Though greed of gain was only one of the several motives that disposed Byron to this venture, it cannot be questioned it was a strong motive. He expected to make much money by the venture; and Hunt, ever hopeful (notwithstanding his frequent fits of despondency) of enrichment without trouble, shared Byron's agreeable confidence in the commercial soundness of the project. It can also be conceived that Byron relished the thought of doing Hunt a good turn. There were several reasons why Byron rather liked the man, whom he regarded disdainfully for his want of breeding. Byron in his youthful generosity had dined with Hunt in Horsemonger Lane Gaol; and in thinking of Hunt, he had a pleasant recollection of his own magnanimity on that occasion. Hunt was one of the very few London journalists who had dared to write in Byron's defence during the storm of 1816; and when his better nature had fair play, Byron was to the last emotionally and unsteadily grateful. Within certain limits Byron had a respect for Hunt's poetical capacity and politics. Moreover, Shelley thought highly, far too highly, of Hunt's literary power, attainments, and nature; and when Byron determined to invite Hunt to come out to him in Italy, he was very much under Shelley's influence. There were other considerations which aided in determining Byron to take Hunt for the coadjutor without capital. Shelley would be a zealous contributor to the paper for Hunt's sake, should Hunt become the joint proprietor and acting editor. Moreover, like Shelley, who was strangely uninformed on the matter, Byron was under the impression that 'The Examiner' was still in the hands of the Hunts,—that John Hunt remained the proprietor of the journal, and that in Italy Leigh Hunt would still be the editor (out for a long holiday) of the powerful journal. The new journal of poetry and humour would therefore be aided by the old journal of wit and politics. With Shelley by his side, Byron may well have imagined that Shelley, Leigh Hunt, and John Hunt (the robust man of business) were worth more for the purpose in view than Tommy Moore, with all his influence in the drawing-rooms.

On hearing of the compact between Leigh Hunt and Byron, with Shelley for a kind of third party (if not third partner to the agreement), Moore and Murray fumed with annoyance and jealousy. Should the new literary venture prove successful (which was not unlikely), and should its success cause Byron to think well of John Hunt as a man of business, the publisher saw it was on the cards that he might lose the poet of whom (after



Byron's death) he exclaimed bitterly to Trelawny, 'That great man with his pen could alone have supported a publishing establishment.' On the other hand, in the growing intimacy of Byron and Shelley, and in the possibility that the new journal would succeed, and that the two proprietors would be welded together by their good fortune into closest friends, Byron's biographer-elect (who by his own confession often had misgivings of his hold on Byron's affections) saw something more than a possibility that he would lose the confidence of his 'noble friend.' It was even conceivable that in the course of years his noble friend would demand restitution of the 'Memoirs' from Murray, and appoint Leigh Hunt his biographer *vice* Thomas Moore, cashiered.

On this point Byron had given both his publisher and the Irish songster cause for surprise, uneasiness, and suspicion. In November 1821 he joined with Moore in conveying to Murray the copyright of the 'Memoirs' which he had given Moore in 1819. The deed of assignment, which conveyed this literary property to the publisher had not been executed many weeks, when Byron began to regret the steps he had taken for the posthumous publication of the autobiographic sketches. The arrangements for Leigh Hunt's journey to Italy had been scarcely completed, when Byron moved Moore to join with him in getting from Murray a power of redeeming the MSS. Leigh Hunt was still on his way from London to Leghorn, when at Byron's instance and urgent request, the deed of 6 May, 1822, was executed by which Byron obtained the power to redeem the 'Memoirs' into his own hands. Byron's change of feeling respecting the autobiographic papers may well have puzzled and alarmed Moore and Murray. Without the cue (as he certainly was) to Byron's reason for wishing for this power over the 'Memoirs' he had so lightly given away, Murray may well have suspected his great poet of thinking he might some day wish to put them in the hands of another publisher. Unaware (as he certainly was) of Byron's real motive and purpose in the matter, Moore may well have suspected his friend of intending to choose another historian of his doings.

Murray, fearful of losing his poet, and Tom Moore, apprehensive of losing his friend, did their best to inspire the author of 'Don Juan' with distaste for his fantastic venture, and with alarm at his rashness, even before it was decided to call the new journal, 'The Liberal.' It was insinuated to Byron that he would lose caste, impair his proper influence, render himself ridiculous by associating himself so closely and openly with such a brace of literary *mauvais sujets* as Leigh Hunt the poetaster

and Shelley the atheist. After 'The Liberal' had begun its brief and unfortunate career, Moore, who had declined to contribute a single column of jingle to the miserable indiscretion, implored his 'noble friend' almost pathetically 'to emerge out of the "Liberal" as quickly as possible. It grieves me,' he added, 'to urge anything so much against Hunt's interest; but I should not hesitate to use the same language to himself were I near him. I would, if I were you, serve him in every possible way but this—I would give him (if he would accept of it) the profits of the same works, published separately—but I would not mix myself up in this way with others. I would not become a partner in this sort of miscellaneous "*pot-au-feu*," where the bad flavour of one ingredient is sure to taint all the rest. I would be, if I were *you*, alone, single-handed, and, as such, invincible.' One may well smile at this from a writer—speaking *in grief*, under an urgent sense of the obligations of friendship—who was well aware that the 'Vision of Judgment' more than any other of the miscellaneous ingredients had tainted the '*pot-au-feu*' and rendered the whole mess offensive to the public palate.

Byron and Leigh Hunt had both altered greatly during the six years that had passed since they bade one another farewell in London. Byron had grown hard, bitter, cynical, greedy of money. In such life as Byron had led since his withdrawal from England, an angel from heaven would have deteriorated into unfitness for angelic society; and though at its best rich in kindness and generous impulsiveness, Byron's nature was never faultless. That morbid selfishness which (in Hobhouse's opinion) stained the man was latent, and sometimes visible, in the boy. On the other hand, Leigh Hunt, at all times deficient in moral robustness, had lost any spirit of honest self-dependence that may have animated him in his earlier time. Besides 'conceiting him into a martyr' (Byron's expression), Horsemonger Lane Gaol, where he lived luxuriously, and to a great degree on the benefactions of his political admirers, had been a bad school for a man with his besetting infirmity. The pecuniary difficulties, that followed his liberation from prison, confirmed him in his disposition to live indolently and self-indulgently on the resources of other people. Having first robbed him of the power to taste the bitterness of unearned bread, circumstances had vitiated his moral palate so that it discovered a peculiar sweetness in bread not earned by the sweat of his own brow or the labour of his own brain. It was not enough for him to say that, after strenuously striving to the utmost of his ability to sustain himself by a comparatively unremunerative vocation, a man of



letters might in moments of great emergency and unforeseen trouble accept without shame pecuniary help from his affluent friends. He had a curious and most demoralizing notion that men of genius—especially of genius like his own—had a natural and manifest right to take from the pockets of their prosperous acquaintances whatever gold they needed for their necessities. He even contrived to persuade himself that by accepting money from a well-to-do friend he laid himself under no obligation to the giver of the money. On the contrary, if any obligation attended the transaction, it was one that made him his benefactor's benefactor, and required the giver to feel grateful to the receiver of the gift. 'I have not,' he wrote, 'had that horror of being under obligation, which is thought an essential refinement in money matters, and which leads some really generous persons, as well as some who only seek personal importance in their generosity, to think they have a right to bestow favours which they would be mortified to receive.'

Though Dr. Elze uses too harsh a word, when he says, 'Hunt's connexion with Byron commenced with a falsehood,' it cannot be questioned that Hunt was deficient in the honourable frankness which is so large a part of fair dealing, when he arranged with Byron to come out to him in Italy, without letting him know, that he had ceased to be editor of 'The Examiner,' and, being absolutely without any source of income, had no prospect of income save the revenue he hoped to get from the journal not yet in existence. He was bound in honour to inform both Byron and Shelley, that should he come to Italy with his family, they or one of them would have to keep him, his wife and his six (or seven) children, till the projected journal should afford him an income, and that, in case the enterprise miscarried, they would have him on their hands for a longer period. This information Harold Skimpole withheld from his two friends, who, though they knew him to be in pecuniary embarrassment and had every reasonable readiness to assist him, were both under the impression that a regular (though possibly somewhat insufficient) income would be coming to him from the office of a London newspaper. There is also no doubt that, whilst he refrained from showing his friends the real state of his circumstances, he was well aware of their misconception of his case. In this reticence respecting matters about which he should have been freely communicative, Leigh Hunt, if not actually guilty of positive falsehood, was certainly guilty of disingenuous concealment.

It follows that this Micawber of the literary world went out to Italy with his wife and children, to prey on the bounty and



to live (certainly for a time, possibly till he and his family should be returned carriage-free to England) on the resources of Shelley, who was by no means rich, and of Byron, to whom he was but slightly known. Byron was astonished at learning, either whilst the Hunts were on their long voyage (of five months) to him, or immediately after their arrival at Leghorn, that his selected coadjutor had not enough in his pocket for a month's current expenses. Under the circumstances he may well have been nettled at the discovery; and the poet—so nicely careful over his petty disbursements as to lose his temper once every seven days over his weekly bills, and so impatient of imposition and extortion as to demand bloody satisfaction of the military horse-sharper who sold him an unsound animal—was not the man to submit tamely to Hunt's arrangements for sucking money from him. From a letter (misdated by an entire year and misplaced in Moore's 'Life') it appears that Byron had received a sufficiently plain intimation of Hunt's predatory character, more than four months before his appearance at Montenero. On February 15, 1822 (not 1823, as Moore misprints it), Shelley wrote to Byron:—

'MY DEAR LORD BYRON.—I enclose you a letter from Hunt, which annoys me on more than one account. You will observe the postscript, and you know me well enough to feel how painful a task is set me in commenting upon it. Hunt had urged me more than once to ask you to lend him this money. My answer consisted in sending him all I could spare, which I have now literally done. Your kindness in fitting up a part of your own house for his accommodation I sensibly felt, and willingly accepted from you on his part, but, believe me, without the slightest intention of imposing, or, if I could help it, allowing to be imposed, any heavier task on your purse. As it has come to this in spite of my exertions, I will not conceal from you the low ebb of my own money affairs in the present moment—that is, my absolute incapacity of assisting Hunt further. I do not think poor Hunt's promise to pay in a given time is worth very much; but mine is less subject to uncertainty, and I should be happy to be responsible for any engagement he may have proposed to you. I am so much annoyed by this subject that I hardly know what to write and much less to say; and I have need of all your indulgence in judging both my feelings and expressions. I shall see you by-and-by.

'Believe me yours most faithfully and sincerely,

'P. B. SHELLEY.'

On his arrival in Leghorn harbour, where he made Trelawny's acquaintance, Leigh Hunt was in the brightest and blithest spirits, overflowing with praise of the Italian sun and climate, pleased with everything about him, and pleasing everybody. If he was disappointed that Byron, tarrying at his villa outside the town, had not come to welcome him in the harbour, he concealed his discontent. The joyous, riant, rather too affable gentleman does not appear to have exhibited any mortification at the greater poet's neglect to call upon him. For the moment he was in no mood to look out for slights; was too delighted to find himself in Italy, whither he had come apparently for pleasure rather than business, to be out of humour for a mere trifle. Moreover, he found congenial occupation in providing for the comfort of Mrs. Hunt (an invalid), and arranging for the conveyance of his babes and baggage to Pisa. A day or two later, however, his spirits fell, when he walked through Leghorn's hot and dusty suburb, to the hottest-looking villa he had ever seen, to make a call on Byron, who had not offered him an opportunity for going to Montenero, *to return* a call. Arriving at an unfortunate moment, when Byron and Teresa and the young Count Pietro were in their highest excitement about the murderous man-servant, who had just stuck a knife into Teresa's brother, the man of letters had a reception, for which he could not be thankful, though he had no right to resent it. Byron's fatness was not the only thing that distressed the visitor. At a glance the mere man of letters saw that the nobleman of letters was no person to lend rouleaux of gold pieces inconsiderately. Having journeyed from England for a pleasant time with Lord Byron, who only six years since was bent on distributing a thousand guineas amongst three necessitous authors, whilst bailiffs were actually seizing the books of his library, Leigh Hunt (a nice reader of the human countenance) was troubled by the worldly hardness and selfish shrewdness of the poet's still handsome face. A chilly tremor played about the heart of the needy *litterateur* who all through his tedious voyage had looked forward to the ease and state and luxury, in which he, and his dear wife, and all his dear children would live, after being welcomed to the palace of the lordly exile, who required his assistance in a graceful enterprise.

Beginning as he meant to go on, Lord Byron from the first showed Mr. Hunt that he was not a man to be imposed upon. And going on as he began, Lord Byron, to the last hour of a vexatious and ignoble association, was very careful not to be imposed upon by 'the Cockneys' (as he designated them contemptuously to Trelawny, before they had been forty-eight hours

in his house), for whose accommodation the ground-floor of the Palazzo Lanfranchi had been fitted at his cost, with suitable furniture, which Shelley had selected and intended to pay for. In some respects he was too careful. He might have been more courteous, without being less careful. He should at least have behaved with a show of cordiality and politeness to poor Mrs. Hunt, to whom he accorded no other greeting than a severely formal bow, without a single word, when she entered his house, exhausted with illness and the fatigue of travelling. He could have kept the Hunts to their proper floor of his palace, without patting the big bull-dog on the head, and saying to him in Tre-lawny's hearing, 'Don't let the Cockneys pass that way.' So long as they lived under the same roof the two poets however maintained a show of mutual complaisance. Though he seldom invited his literary coadjutor to the salons of the first floor, Byron gossiped with him in the garden. Occasionally he mounted him on a horse, and took him for a ride to the farm-house. Now and then he even relaxed so far as to invite the 'chief of the Cockneys' to dinner, and to hold a brief conversation with Mrs. Hunt, who was at no pains to conciliate the peer. As Mrs. Hunt could not speak Italian and the Countess Guiccioli could not speak a sentence of English, the ladies had a good excuse for keeping apart. At first Teresa showed a disposition to behave graciously to Hunt; but on finding him an unsympathetic listener to her complaints of Byron's faulty behaviour she dropped him from her consideration. Shelley's death, following so quickly on the arrival of the Cockneys, placed the occupant of the basement rooms in a terribly false position. Had Shelley lived, his influence would have diminished the friction attending the intercourse of the rich lord and the penniless author. Under Shelley's handling Byron would have been less inclined to resent than laugh at Hunt's crafty silence respecting his disconnexion from 'The Examiner.' Moreover, as Shelley would have borne at least half the burden of the shiftless family Byron would have been less apprehensive for his own purse. As Byron wrote the ninth, tenth and eleventh cantos of 'Don Juan' in August, whilst the Hunts were under his roof in the Lung'Arno, it may be taken for granted that the father of the little Hunts was not absent from the poet's mind when he wrote the stanza,

'Alas! how deeply painful is all payment!

Take lives, take wives, take aught except men's purses,

As Machiavel shows those in purple raiment,

Such is the shortest way to general curses.

They hate a murderer much less than a claimant

On that sweet ore which everybody nurses.—

Kill a man's family, and he may brook it,

But keep your hands out of his breeches' pocket.'



The amount of the money expended by Byron on the Hunts was not great. Beside paying for the 'good and respectable' furniture for their rooms in the Palazzo Lanfranchi, and sending 200*l.* to England for the charges of their voyage to Italy, he gave Hunt 70*l.* at Pisa, defrayed the cost of their journey from Pisa to Genoa, and supplied them with another 30*l.* to enable them to go from Pisa to Florence. The sum probably did not greatly exceed 500*l.* There was no need for him to give them more; but under the circumstances he could scarcely have given them less. From the way in which Leigh Hunt writes of money, pecuniary obligations, and Byronic niggardliness, it is obvious that the sum would have risen to thousands, had it not been for Byron's resoluteness in resisting the insatiable applicant 'for more.' It is a sordid business to smile about. But Hunt's indignant account of Byron's device for keeping the demands on his purse down to the minimum is droll as well as slightly sickening. Hunt's notion was that the money should have been handed over in the way least likely to wound the recipient's pride. Byron, on the contrary, saw it would be to his disadvantage to part with his gold thus considerably and delicately. 'During our residence at Pisa,' says the *litterateur* in difficulties, 'I had from him, or rather from his steward, to whom he always sent me for the money, and who doled it out to me as if my disgraces were being counted, the sum of 70*l.*'

Whilst the position at the Palazzo Lanfranchi was irritating to Byron, it was exasperating to Hunt, who, saved from sycophancy by constitutional insolence, was intolerant alike of his social superiors and his intellectual superiors. For weeks before the appearance of the first number of 'The Liberal,' the joint-adventurers in the ill-fated enterprise (that perished in the delivery of its fourth budget of wit and wisdom) were as thoroughly and heartily at feud as Moore and Murray wished them to be. Under these circumstances it is not surprising that when Byron moved with his dependants from Pisa to Genoa, he would not travel in the company of the Hunts. The migration was accomplished towards the end of December. Whilst Byron went by land with Teresa Guiccioli to Lerici, the rest of the party went thither by water,—the Hunts in a felucca; Byron's servants, with 'what the Yankees would have called a freight of notions,' in another boat; whilst Trelawny, as director in chief of the operations, convoyed the voyagers in Byron's yacht the 'Bolivar,' having the plate, books and papers under his especial care. Meeting at Lerici—where Byron was detained for four days (two of them spent in bed) by one of his violent attacks of indigestion—the whole party proceeded, after visiting Shelley's last home,

from Lerici to Sestri by water, Byron and the Countess making the passage in a fourth boat by themselves. 'It was pretty,' says Hunt, 'to see the boats with their white sails, gliding by the rocks, over that blue sea.' The remainder of the journey from Sestri to Genoa was by land,—over the maritime part of the Apennines, lying (says the same descriptive writer) 'in a succession of great doughy billows, like so much enormous pudding, or petrified mud;'—Byron and Madame Guiccioli still holding aloof from the Hunts, till they came to Albaro, where the two poets (according to Byron's statements of the case) had scarcely any intercourse, with the exception of unavoidable conferences on matters of business. Well might poor Hunt ejaculate, 'Genoa again! With what different feelings we beheld it the first time!'

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## CHAPTER XXIII.

### GENOA.

Casa Saluzzi—Failure of 'The Liberal'—Byron's Annoyance at the Misadventure—His Literary Work at Albaro—The Blessingtons at Genoa—Count D'Orsay's 'English Notes'—Message of Peace to Lady Byron—Leigh Hunt on Byronic Pettinesses—Teresa Guiccioli's Influence—Byron's Letters to her from Cephalonia—His Correspondence with the London Greek Committee—Farewell to the Blessingtons—Departure from Genoa—Leghorn—Goethe's Letter—Argostoli.

LEAVING Pisa in September 1822, when he was well within one year and seven months of his death, Byron went to Genoa and for something less than ten months' abode with the Gambas (the two Counts and Teresa Guiccioli) in the Casa Saluzzi,—the house, standing in a courtyard planted with cypress-trees, cut fantastically in accordance with the practice of what the English gardeners of the seventeenth century used to term 'topiary art;' the house where he entertained the Blessingtons and Count D'Orsay, and in January 1823 received the enthusiastic young Frenchman, Mons. J. J. Coulmann, who having expected to find him a person of haughty bearing and heroic presence, was greatly surprised by the cordial manners, diminutive stature, and simple costume of the poet 'whose publishers paid him a guinea a line;' the house famous in Byronic story as the scene of his last literary labours, and of the negotiations with the London Greek Committee, that resulted in the fatal expedition to Greece. Planted in a picturesque suburb, the Casa Saluzzi was a pleasant

place, commanding fine views of Genoa, the gulf and the Apennine range.

The first number of 'The Liberal' came from London to the joint-proprietors by the Genoese post. It has been already observed how quickly the birth of the unlucky publication was followed by its death. No one can say that Byron figures creditably in this business. In truth, the affair of 'The Liberal' is the episode of his purely literary career in which he shows to least advantage. The journal having been a thing of his own conception and inception, and its failure being due almost entirely to his own capricious distaste for the enterprise before the first number went to press, he should have had the manliness to confess himself alike responsible for the project and the misadventure. But, instead of taking the discredit to himself, he held the brothers Hunt (especially Leigh Hunt) accountable both for the undertaking and the miscarriage. By clouding the mental and moral vision, and throwing matters out of historic perspective, anger disposes even truthful men to untruthfulness; and of all living men Byron under irritation was the least likely or able to take an accurate and judicial view of the circumstances of his displeasure. Ceasing to hold himself responsible for the journal as soon as he foresaw failure for it, he began to think and talk of it as the affair of the Hunts. Having designed the thing for the attainment of his own ends and the gratification of his own ambition, the venture had no sooner come to grief, than he contrived to persuade himself that his only motive for having a part in the fiasco was benevolence towards the Hunts. 'I am afraid the Journal is a bad business, and won't do,' he wrote to Murray in October 9, 1822, 'but in it I am sacrificing *myself* for others—I can have no advantage in it. I believe the *brothers Hunts* to be honest men: I am sure that they are poor ones; they have not a Nap. They pressed me to engage in this work, and in an evil hour I consented. Still I shall not repent, if I can do them the least service. I have done all I can for Leigh Hunt since he came here; but it is almost useless;—his wife is ill, his six' (there were *seven*, by the way, according to Trelawny) 'children not very tractable, and in the affairs of this world he himself is a child. The death of Shelley left them totally aground; and I could not see them in such a state without using the common feelings of humanity, and what means were in my power, to set them afloat again.' From any one but Byron this would be staggering. Even from him it causes eyes to open with astonishment. In the same strain he wrote to a lady [Letter 509, Moore's 'Life'], 'If you mean to say that, had he' (*i. e.* Leigh Hunt) 'been a wealthy man, I would have joined



in this Journal, I answer in the negative. . . . I engaged in the Journal from good-will towards him, added to respect for his character, literary and personal; and no less for his political courage, as well as regret for his present circumstances; I did this in the hope that he might, with the same aid from literary friends of literary contributions (which is requisite for all journals of a mixed nature), render himself independent.' This was the amazing way in which Byron spoke and wrote to his acquaintance about his part in an enterprise, which had originated in his own mere motion for the attainment of his own private ends, and for which had it been successful he would have taken to himself something more than the lion's share of the credit. It may not be imagined that he was fibbing wilfully. Had he not persuaded himself that he was drawn into the affair by benevolent concern for the Hunts, he could not have written thus to Moore and Murray who to his knowledge knew as much as himself about the matter. As soon as he quarrelled, Byron talked wide of the truth—without knowing it. The same Byron who, in his excusable annoyance at Leigh Hunt, accounted in this marvellous fashion for his disastrous entanglement with the needy man of letters and *his* journal, was the same Byron who, in his furious rages against his wife, thought her the moral Clytemnestra of her comparatively unoffending lord, and in his colder resentment against her persisted in declaring that he could not conceive why she had quarrelled with him.

At Genoa Byron wrote 'The Age of Bronze,' 'The Island,' and the twelfth, thirteenth, fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth cantos of 'Don Juan,'—the great, unfinished satire which Goethe, with all his admiration for the performance, declared the most immoral poem that was ever written. Whilst thus busy with his pen he had a civil pretext for seeing but little of Leigh Hunt; of whom, by the way, he probably saw more than he admitted in his letters to Moore and Murray. Speaking of himself as 'passing a melancholy time at Albaro,' Hunt says, 'My intercourse with Lord Byron, though less than before, was considerable; and we were always, as the phrase is, "on good terms." He knew what I felt, for I said it. I also knew what he thought, for he said that "in a manner;" and he was in the habit of giving you a good deal to understand, in what he did not say. In the midst of all his strange conduct, he professed a great personal regard. He could do the most humiliating things, insinuate the bitterest, both of me and my friends, and then affect to do away all with a soft word, protesting that nothing he ever said was meant to apply to myself.' The truth of the matter seems to be that, whilst keeping vigilant guard over his

breeches pockets, and resolutely checking each disposition to yield to Harold Skimpole's insidious arts, Byron softened occasionally to the man whom he pitied for being a poor devil, and would have liked heartily had he been a self-sustaining 'poor devil!'

In April and May 1823, Byron saw much of the Blessingtons and their *Cupidon déchainé*,—the Irish Earl to whom Lady Byron's trustees had refused to lend the poet's money; the Countess who had already published a book or two; and the young Frenchman whose MS. journal of English society and manners afforded Byron much diversion. (What has become of the young Count's Journal? In whose keeping does it rest? Will it be found two centuries hence in English libraries, side by side with Grammont's 'Memoirs?') Calling at the Casa Saluzzi on April Fool's Day, 1823, the Blessingtons left Genoa on the second day of the following June, after spending just two months in familiar intercourse with the poet, who, opening his heart to the Countess on the old story of his domestic troubles (a subject, by the way, on which he could be curiously garrulous to casual acquaintances), opened it the more fully and precisely, on discovering that Lady Blessington was on friendly terms with a gentleman (even then at Genoa), whose sister was Lady Byron's most confidential friend. Conversing on the one hand with this gentleman about the anxieties of his sister's especial friend, and on the other hand with the poet himself about his feelings towards his wife, it was natural for Lady Blessington to entertain a wish to be of service in bringing about a friendly understanding between the long-separated husband and wife. One noteworthy result of this amiable readiness on Lady Blessington's part, and her free talk with Byron on the interesting topic, was that he wrote her the following epistle:—

May 3, 1823.

'DEAR LADY BLESSINGTON,—My request would be for a copy of the miniature of Lady Byron, which I have seen in the possession of the late Lady Noel, as I have no picture, or indeed memorial of any kind of Lady Byron, as all her letters were in her own possession before I left England, and we have had no correspondence since—at least on her part.

'My message, with regard to the infant, is simply to this effect—that in the event of any accident occurring to the mother, and my remaining the survivor, it would be my wish to have her plans carried into effect, both with regard to the education of the child, and the person or persons under whose care Lady Byron might be desirous that she should be placed. It is not

my intention to interfere with her in any way on the subject during her life ; and I presume that it would be some consolation to her to know (if she is in ill health, as I am given to understand) that in *no* case would anything be done, as far as I am concerned, but in strict conformity with Lady Byron's own wishes and intentions—left in what manner she thought proper.

‘ Believe me, dear Lady Blessington, your obliged, &c., &c.

‘ NOEL BYRON.’

Three days later in a letter dated May 6, 1823, (enclosing the poet's withheld letter to Lady Byron, of November 17, 1821,—printed in the preceding chapter), Byron says, ‘ The letter which I enclose I was prevented sending by my despair of its doing any good. I was perfectly sincere when I wrote it, and am so still. But it is difficult for me to withstand the thousand provocations on that subject, which both friends and foes have for seven years been throwing in the way of a man whose feelings were once quick, and whose temper was never patient. But “returning were as tedious as go o’er.” I feel this as much as ever Macbeth did ; and it is a dreary sensation, which at least avenges the real and imaginary wrongs of one of the two unfortunate persons it concerns.’

The only persons to deny or doubt Byron's sincerity in this correspondence with Lady Blessington and in the withheld letter of November 17, 1821, to Lady Byron, are those who have been induced to believe him to have been guilty of misconduct that, lying beyond forgiveness, rendered it impossible for him to have been sincere in writing letters as though forgiveness and reconciliation were possible. But it is certain that the persons thinking thus of his misconduct were led to think so by misconception or misrepresentation. It is certain he had committed no such unpardonable offence. It follows, therefore, that the grounds for questioning his sincerity are imaginary. There must be an end to personal history if these letters may not be taken as evidence of the state of feeling which they indicate. Unsupported by a single scrap of good testimony, discredited by the conclusive evidence as to the nature and extent of his misbehaviour to his wife, the notion that the poet played the hypocrite in this correspondence, and fabricated the withheld letter merely to show it about to his advantage, must be dismissed as absolutely ludicrous.

The letter to Lady Blessington was a sincere overture by the poet for something like a friendly arrangement with his wife. To most readers it will seem something more,—the first step towards a petition for complete reconciliation. By asking for



his wife's miniature, because he had no picture of her and desired the solace of a portrait to strengthen his recollection of her lineaments, he declared with equal delicacy and force, that he longed to look again on her face. In promising never to interfere with her in any matter touching their child's education, he made a promise (to which Lady Blessington and every reader of his letter to that lady would be witnesses), that must have afforded great comfort to the mother who, now that Ada had ceased to be a mere nursling, was in constant fear that he would soon come to England and claim his daughter. It was a momentous concession of parental right, for which he might well feel sure at least of his wife's gratitude. It was his return for the lock of the child's hair, and the words written by his wife on the paper, enclosing the hair. After this exchange of conciliatory gifts, friends surely had reason to hope that the time was not far distant when the husband and wife would meet occasionally in amity, even though they might not think it well to repeat the hazardous experiment of living together under the same roof.

Whilst Byron's thoughts were turning thus tenderly to the wife, of whom he had written so many violent and cruel words, and to whom he had hoped in 1816 to return in a few months, his feelings for Teresa, which had never known the delicacy of love, were fast losing the warmth of dying passion. Byron's long separation from her, after her withdrawal from the Papal territory, had resulted in a brief, though faint, renewal of his former delight in her beauty and society. 'Fancying she walked in the eyes of the whole world, a heroine by the side of a poet,' Leigh Hunt admits that when he first 'saw her at Montenero, she was in a state of excitement and exaltation, and had really something of this look.' Untruthfulness in actual words, be it observed, was not one of Hunt's infirmities. Spite and malice never caused him to pen a deliberate falsehood even against Byron. His suggestion that Byron was deficient in masculine courage—the only statement resembling a falsehood in his base book—was not so much an assertion of a fact, as an ungenerous but sincere inference from unquestionable facts,—the poet's physical timidity and nervous unsteadiness, when he was taken unawares by little dangers, till he had found time to gather his fortitude and resoluteness. The painful fact of Hunt's book to Byron's disparagement is its truthfulness. Bringing together all the great poet's pettinesses and meannesses, to which a generous friend would have closed his eyes, it tells them so veraciously that Trelawny, with all his disposition to admire Byron, was constrained to admit that of all the numerous

books about the poet, it was the book which gave the best idea of the man, as he appeared to his ordinary acquaintance. Consequently Leigh Hunt is a reliable witness respecting Teresa Guiccioli; and he had not known her many weeks before he saw that Byron had no real love for her, and that she had no real love for him,—that whilst he took a perverse delight in mismanaging her, she ‘did not in the least know how to manage him, when he was wrong.’ The poet found pleasure in shocking her by no means nice sense of delicacy; and after worrying her into petulant exhibitions of disapproval of his conduct, he would look ‘as if he enjoyed her vehemence, and did not believe a word of it.’ Besides protesting against his words or acts, and ‘nagging at him’ to his face before witnesses, she used to make complaints against him to his acquaintances behind his back. Looking no older than her years at Montenero, she in a few months assumed an air of age and weariness and secret misery. This ‘rapid and very singular change,’ says Hunt, ‘took place, to the surprise of everybody. In the course of a few months she seemed to have lived as many years. It is most likely in that interval that she discovered she had no real hold on the affections of her companion.’ The witness’s ‘every one’ includes, of course, Trelawny (who used to bear evidence to Hunt’s accuracy), and Mrs. Shelley and Mrs. Williams. What Hunt saw was foreseen by Shelley, who had no sooner made Teresa’s acquaintance than he detected her insufficiency for the difficult place into which passion had carried her, and predicted that she would have plenty of time to repent her rashness in leaving her husband for so changeful an admirer. Knowing that Byron had never really loved her, Hoppner had no doubt that a chief cause of the poet’s restlessness in Italy was a desire to get away from her. Hunt, Trelawny, Mrs. Shelley, Mrs. Williams and Hoppner are a goodly company of witnesses to this point. Their evidence is not to be disposed of by the smartness with which Tom Moore whipt up Teresa’s testimony in her own favour,—so as ‘to run her’ as an angelic woman against the unrelenting Lady Byron.

Another witness to the same point was Byron himself. Sitting at the stern of the ‘Hercules,’ when they were making their slow passage from Leghorn to Cephalonia, Byron said to Trelawny, ‘The Greeks are returned to barbarism; Mitford says the people never were anything better. Nor do I know what I am going for. *I was tired of Italy*, and liked Greece, and the London Committee told me I should be of use, but of what use they did not say nor did I see.’ This confession that he was tired of Italy and wanted to get out of the country,

where he left Teresa and her father to go their own way, is significant of a state of feeling towards the young Countess that may be called 'thinly veiled estrangement.' No doubt he had several reasons for wishing to leave the land. The mortifying and humiliating failure of the Carbonarist movement, to which he had committed himself so openly, was one cause of his distaste for the country, where he had so often declared his purpose of spending the remainder of his days. Remorse for his Venetian depravity was another cause of the distaste. Italy was mournfully associated with the sorrow that came to him from the death of his natural daughter, whose interment in England was a pathetic revelation of her father's affection for the country of his birth and the scenes of his boyhood. At the same time he disliked Italy as the scene of his recent literary humiliation, which he would not have been so desirous of shifting from himself to his coadjutor, had it not touched his pride acutely. Moreover, his relations with Hunt, on which he cannot have reflected with complacency, and the feeling of sorrow and repugnance, with which he recalled the circumstances of Shelley's death and cremation, quickened his wish to escape from a land in which he had sinned and suffered much. But the strongest of all his motives for clearing out of Italy was his desire to get away from Teresa Guiccioli, and to be quit of an alliance which he had never meant to be anything more than a temporary arrangement, and which, now that the Countess irked and bored and fretted him, was nothing better than a vexatious and unendurable entanglement.

The Countess Guiccioli persuaded Moore to believe, or at least persuaded him to represent, that Byron left her in Italy, because the unsettled state of Greece rendered it an unsuitable country for her to reside in. Probably this was the poet's pretext for requiring her to remain in her native land, whilst he followed his fate in scenes dear to him from early manhood. But there is often a wide difference between the real reason and fair pretext for a decision. The unsettled state of South America did not preclude him from meaning to take her thither in his company, when he was in a better humour with her and was meditating an expedition without any purpose, that would be defeated by her presence at his side. Though there was war in Greece, whither he had no intention of going directly from Genoa, tranquillity reigned in the Ionian Islands, where he meant to linger and loiter, whilst gleaning sure and sufficient information about the men and parties engaged in the struggle for emancipation : and had not his passion for the Italian lady completely burnt itself out, she would have been permitted to



accompany him to the Islands,—would have partaken of the festivities at Argostoli, joined in the excursion to Ithaca, and shared the poet's cottage at Metaxata. In that case, instead of making the voyage from Genoa to Cephalonia in the lumbering 'Hercules,' that had no accommodation for a lady, Byron would have sailed thither in the 'Bolivar'—the yacht that had been built for him, during his stay at Pisa, when he was playing with a project for an expedition to Bolivar's country, with Teresa for his fellow-voyager. In Grecian waters, where he would sail within view from the windows of London drawing-rooms,—where his movements would be reported in every English newspaper,—where he wished to figure in the way that might dispose Lady Byron to send him the miniature he had so recently solicited, nothing was further from Byron's purpose, than to have the notorious Teresa hanging on his arm in every port at which he might touch. Truth to tell, she would have been a more embarrassing fellow-voyager in the Ionian Islands where the wives of English residents would probably have declined to receive her, than in Greece where the main difficulty would have been to find her a safe and comfortable asylum. In selling the 'Bolivar' to Lord Blessington for a song (of four hundred guineas), and determining to make the voyage to the Islands in the 'Hercules,' with his horses and freight of arms and munitions, Byron's main object was probably to put an end to the harassing entreaties of the lady whom he was determined to leave behind him.

Writing during the Marquise de Boissy's life, after speaking contemptuously but none too lightly of the lady's 'Recollections of Lord Byron,' Dr. Elze recommended her to 'take steps for the publication of Byron's correspondence with herself, and of the letters of her brother Pietro written while he was in Greece.' It can scarcely be doubted that the correspondence would have been published before this advice was given, had the correspondence been calculated to sustain the lady's flattering view of her relation and services to the poet, who lived long enough to make her see his purpose of throwing her over, even as he had dismissed Claire. Moreover, though Moore avers (on the lady's authority) that Byron wrote 'frequently but briefly' to Teresa after leaving Italy, there are grounds for a strong opinion that the letters were more brief than frequent. That they were cold and unloverlike epistles may be inferred from the extracts from three of them, printed in Moore's 'Life : ' for of course Madame Guiccioli gave the biographer the passages that were most eloquent of the writer's devotion to the receiver of the epistles. Here are the three specimens of the way in which Byron wrote

from Cephalonia to the lady who (according to Moore) was the only woman he ever really loved, with the single exception of Mary Chaworth:—

(1) ‘October 7 [1823].

‘Pietro has told you all the gossip of the island,—our earthquake, our politics, and present abode in a pretty village. As his opinions and mine on the Greeks are nearly similar, I need say little on that subject. I was a fool to come here; but, being here, I must see what is to be done.’

What a contrast between these frigid lines and the effusions Byron used to send his Teresa from Venice! If it be pleaded that the poet had his hands full of momentous affairs, when he deputed Pietro Gamba to give his sister ‘the gossip of the island,’ let it be remembered how Napoleon during the fierce agitations and innumerable distractions of his campaigns wrote the tenderest of love-letters to Josephine. Moreover, let it be borne in mind that, instead of thinking him engrossed by affairs, the Marquise de Boissy thought Byron had leisure for writing successive cantos of ‘Don Juan’ and copious additions to the ‘Memoirs,’ during his residence in Cephalonia.

(2) ‘October — [1823].

‘We are still in Cephalonia, waiting for news of a more accurate description; for all is contradiction and division in the reports of the state of the Greeks. I shall fulfil the object of my mission from the Committee, and then return into Italy; for it does not seem likely that, as an individual, I can be of use to them;—at least no other foreigner has yet appeared to be so, nor does it seem likely that any will be at present. Pray be as cheerful and tranquil as you can; and be assured that there is nothing here that can excite anything but a wish to be with you again,—though we are very kindly treated by the English here of all descriptions. Of the Greeks, I can’t say much good hitherto, and I do not like to speak ill of them, though they do so of one another.’

Again what a contrast to the letters he wrote her in the summer and autumn of 1819! Instead of hungering and thirsting for her presence and the music of her voice, he cannot even say unequivocally that he wishes to be with her again. All he can aver in that direction is that he has seen no woman in Cephalonia capable of inspiring him with any other wish,—no woman of whom Teresa should be jealous.

(3) 'October 29 [1823].

'You may be sure the moment I can join you again will be as welcome to me as at any period of our recollection. There is nothing very attractive here to divide my attention; but I must attend to the Greek cause, both from honour and inclination. Messrs. B—— and T—— are both in the Morea, where they have been very well received, and both of them write in good spirits and hopes. I am anxious to hear how the Spanish cause will be arranged, as I think it may have an influence on the Greek contest. I wish that both were fairly and favourably settled, that I might return to Italy, and talk over with you *our*, or rather Pietro's adventures, some of which are rather amusing, as also some of the incidents of our voyages and travels. But I reserve them, in the hope that we may laugh over them together at no very distant period.'

Something less frigid! But what luke-warmth for the sensitive, ardent, impetuous Byron, when writing to the only woman he ever really loved, with the single exception of Mary Chaworth! The moment of their reunion will be as welcome to him as any moment of their liaison; there is no beauty, amongst the belles of the island, 'to divide his attention;' and he anticipates joining with Teresa in laughing over her brother's adventures! But he does not trouble himself to describe any of these adventures, for the mitigation of her melancholy, during her lord's absence. With what a heavy heart must Teresa have put away these cold and unfeeling notes (after wetting them with her tears) by the side of the epistles he wrote her, in the days when he loved her—after a fashion! The notes were all the colder to her because they were not written in *her* native Italian (the language of which he had so perfect a mastery), but in *his* native English of which she knew so little, that she could not get at the purport of the brief letters without the help of a dictionary. It is curiously indicative of Byron's purpose to Teresa that he thus wrote to her in English from Cephalonia. Never before (with a single exception) had he written to her in English. In her absence from the city, whilst dallying with his passion at Bologna he wrote the memorable love-letter (on the fly-leaf of one of her favourite books)—in English, so that she might not understand a word of it. In Cephalonia, whilst soothing his conscience by writing her a few civil and faintly amatory sentences, he again wrote to her in English,—so that the little love of the epistles should waste by translation and fade almost to nothing, ere her



mind could apprehend it. At the same time, for his own comfort or Pietro Gamba's contentment, Byron used now and then to put a few words (whether they were English or Italian, does not appear) into the letters which Teresa received from her affectionate brother, who seems to have done his best to keep his sister in Byron's memory.

Whilst he was in familiar intercourse with the Blessingtons at Genoa, Byron was in correspondence with the Committee that had been formed in London to aid the Greeks in their efforts for the emancipation of their country. By a letter, dated from London on 14 March, 1823, though from some postal delay it did not come to his hands till the twentieth of the ensuing May, Byron was told that he had been elected a member of the London Greek Committee, whose agent (Mr., Captain, or General Blaquiére as he is diversely styled in private letters and published literature) was on his way to Greece (for the purpose of gathering information respecting the affairs of the country), with instructions to touch at Genoa, in order to confer with the poet. On April 5, 1823, just five days after making the acquaintance of Lord and Lady Blessington, Byron wrote to Blaquiére, inviting him to Casa Saluzzi in the following terms :

‘ *Albaro, April 5, 1823.*

‘DEAR SIR,—I shall be delighted to see you and your Greek friend, and the sooner the better. I have been expecting you for some time,—you will find me at home. I cannot express to you how much I feel interested in the cause, and nothing but the hopes I entertained of witnessing the liberation of Italy itself prevented me long ago from returning to do what little I could, as an individual, in that land which it is an honour even to have visited.

‘ Ever yours truly,

‘ NOEL BYRON.’

On the twelfth of the following month, after being for six weeks in possession of the intelligence of the London Committee's letter that came to his hands on the twentieth of May, Byron wrote the letter published in Moore's ‘*Life*,’ beginning with

‘ *Genoa, May 12, 1823.*

‘SIR,—I have great pleasure in acknowledging your letter, and the honour which the Committee have done me :—I shall endeavour to deserve their confidence by every means in my power. My first wish is to go up into the Levant in person, where I might be enabled to advance, if not the cause, at

least the means of obtaining information which the Committee might be desirous of acting upon; and my former residence in the country, my familiarity with the Italian language (which is there universally spoken, or at least to the same extent as French in the more polished parts of the Continent), and my *not* total ignorance of the Romaic, would afford me some advantages of experience. To this project the only objection is of a domestic nature, and I shall try to get over it;—if I fail in this, I must do what I can where I am; but it will be always a source of regret to me, to think that I might perhaps have done more for the cause on the spot.'

Whilst they afford a precise statement of the service he felt himself capable of rendering the Committee, these words are also especially interesting for the indication that Teresa Guiccioli (the only person in a position to make 'the only objection of a domestic nature') was using all her failing influence to withhold the poet from an honourable enterprise. Referring again to the possibility that this influence would prevent him from going to Greece, and at the same time indicating the magnitude of the pecuniary aid he was prepared to render the cause, in case he should overcome the domestic obstacle, Byron wrote in the same long letter, 'The principal material wanted by the Greeks appears to be, first, a park of field artillery—light and fit for mountain service; secondly, gunpowder; thirdly, hospital or medical stores. The readiest mode of transmission is, I hear, by Idra, addressed to Mr. Negri, the minister. I meant to send up a certain quantity of the two latter—no great deal—but enough for an individual to show his good wishes for the Greek success,—but am pausing, because, in case I should go myself, I can take them with me. I do not want to limit my own contribution to this merely, but more especially, if I can get to Greece myself, I should devote whatever resources I can muster of my own, to advancing the great object.'

On the 7th of July, 1823, the poet (turned 'man of action') wrote to Mr. Bowring, 'We sail on the 12th for Greece. I have had a letter from Mr. Blaquièrè, too long for present transcription, but very satisfactory. The Greek Government expects me without delay. In conformity to the desires of Mr. B. and other correspondents in Greece, I have to suggest, with all deference to the Committee, that a remittance of even "*ten thousand pounds only*" (Mr. B.'s expression) would be of the greatest service to the Greek Government at present. I have also to recommend strongly the attempt of a loan, for which there will be offered a sufficient security by deputies now on their way to England. In the mean time, I hope the Committee will be enabled to do some-

thing effectual. For my own part, I mean to carry up, in cash or credits, above eight, and nearly 9000*l.* sterling, which I am enabled to do by funds I have in Italy, and credits in England. Of this sum I must necessarily reserve a portion for the subsistence of myself and suite; the rest I am willing to apply in the manner which seems most likely to be useful to the cause—having of course some guarantee or assurance, that it will not be misapplied to any individual speculation. If I remain in Greece, which will mainly depend upon the presumed probable utility of my presence there, and of the opinion of the Greeks themselves as to its propriety—in short, if I am welcome to them, I shall continue, during my residence at least, to apply such portions of my income, present and future, as may forward the object—that is to say, what I can spare for that purpose. Privations I can, or at least could once bear—abstinence I am accustomed to—and as to fatigue, I was once a tolerable traveller. What I may be now, I cannot tell—but I will try.’ Now that he had entered upon his share of the Wentworth revenue, Byron’s income may be computed at between 6000*l.* and 7000*l.* a-year. The occasion having come for spending his hoarded money (to be computed at about 9000*l.* or 10,000*l.*), Byron was prepared to spend it in a way to redeem his honour from imputations of ignoble niggardliness; provided he could see his way to spending it effectually for the two ends he had in view,—the success of a cause, that had his sincere though cold approval; and the attainment of distinction that, whilst satisfying or at least gratifying his appetite for glory, would atone to human judgment for the errors of his youth.

Between the date of Blaquière’s visit to him at Albaro (April 5, 1823) and the date of this last-mentioned letter to Bowring (July 7, 1823), Byron experienced alternations of confidence and despondency, resoluteness and vacillation. To-day hopeful of Greece and the part he should play for her emancipation, he was possessed on the morrow by gloomy anticipations for the country and dismal presentiments of disaster to himself from the enterprise. On May 26, 1823, Captain Roberts wrote from Genoa to Trelawny, ‘Between you and me, I think there is small chance of Byron’s going to Greece; as I think from the wavering manner in which he speaks of it; he said the other day, “Well, Captain, if we do not go to Greece, I am determined to go somewhere, and hope we shall be at sea together by next month, as I am tired of this place, the shore and all the people on it.”’ On the evening (June 1, 1823) before the Blessingtons left Genoa, the poet was sitting on a sofa by the side of Lady Blessington in the presence of several persons,



when he remarked with a voice and air of overpowering sadness, 'Here we are all now together—but when and where shall we meet again? I have a sort of boding that we see each other now for the last time; as something tells me I shall never again return from Greece;' the melancholy utterance being followed by one of those womanish fits of hysterical weeping to which he was liable in certain moods of violent agitation at every period of his life. Resting his head on an arm of the sofa, he sobbed, as his tears fell, like a schoolgirl, before he recovered enough self-command to make a jest of what he called his 'nervousness.' Distributing farewell gifts amongst the party—a book to one, a print of his bust by Bartolini to another—he gave Lady Blessington a pin from his breast, a gift which he recalled on the morrow, replacing it with a gold chain of Venetian manufacture. 'My dear Lady Blessington,' he wrote in the first paragraph of a letter that came to the lady's hands on the day of her departure from Genoa, 'I am *superstitious*, and have recollected that memorials with a *point* are of less fortunate augury; I will, therefore, request you to accept, instead of the pin, the enclosed chain, which is of so slight a value that you need not hesitate.'—This passage of weakness was followed by one of comparative buoyancy and fortitude, during which he went on board several vessels with Captain Roberts, for the purpose of choosing a suitable ship for the voyage. 'Byron,' the captain wrote to Trelawny, on June 5, 1823, 'has sold the "Bolivar" to Lord Blessington for four hundred guineas, and is determined to go to Greece; he says, whilst he was in doubt, fearing it might prove no reality, he did not like to bring you here; now, he wishes much to see you to have your opinion as to what steps it will be most necessary to take.' Then came the fit of vacillation that caused Mrs. Shelley so late as June 9, 1823, to write to Trelawny, 'Lord Byron says, that as he has not heard from Greece, his going there is uncertain: but if he does go, he is extremely desirous that you should join him.' Six days later, with an accession of resoluteness, Byron wrote to Trelawny, to come to him quickly, as he had at last made up his mind to go to Greece, 'the only place he ever was contented in.' It is noteworthy that the poet excuses himself for not writing sooner, because his indecision made him fearful of giving his friend 'a journey for nothing.' He adds, 'They all say I can be of use in Greece. I do not know how, nor do they; but at all events let us go.'

It does not appear that Byron ever thought again of drawing back from the collar, after bringing his shoulder up to it, in this faint-hearted way. Before the 23rd of June he had hired the

'Hercules,' the rocking, rolling, collier-built tub of 120 tons, at whose manifest deficiencies Trelawny grumbled to no purpose, whilst Byron observed smilingly, 'They say I have got her on easy terms,'—a consideration that afforded no contentment to the Cornish adventurer who was not the paymaster. Trelawny having appeared on the scene, matters moved towards the end in view. Horse-boxes for five animals (Trelawny's *one*, and Byron's *four*) were knocked together by the contractor, who 'scamped his work,' to the subsequent inconvenience of the voyagers; the arms and ammunition, with the 'Bolivar's' two one-pounders and a year's supply of medicines for a thousand men, were stowed away. The horses had been shipped; Byron's suite (as Moore grandly styles Pietro Gamba, Trelawny, Bruno the Italian doctor who had never seen practice, and five or six men-servants) had embarked; the poet, with his ten thousand crowns in specie and his forty thousand crowns in bills of exchange, was afloat; in short, everything but the breeze was ready for a beginning of the voyage on July 13, 1823,—at the close of which day the adventurers slept on board the 'Hercules.'

Moore's account of Byron's departure contains some curious examples of the inaccuracy too often discoverable in personal histories. According to the biographer, Byron and his companions, after passing the night in their berths, cleared the port at sunrise of the 14th of July, when from want of wind they remained in sight of Genoa the whole day; the dead calm of the previous four-and-twenty hours being followed by a night of serious danger. The moon shone full and clear, but the wind was violent and adverse. Remaining on deck during the storm, Byron, 'with the aid of such of his suite as were not disabled by sea-sickness,' busied himself in preserving the horses, which had broken loose and injured each other. 'After making head against the wind for four hours, the captain' (the biographer continues) 'was at last obliged to steer back to Genoa, and re-entered the port at six in the morning,' when the poet, on relanding to pass the day (July 15th) on shore, 'appeared thoughtful, and remarked that he considered a bad beginning a favourable omen.' The day of July 15th, spent by the carpenters in repairing the damages done to the vessel, was spent by Byron in a visit to the Casa Saluzzi, which the Countess Guiccioli had left a few hours earlier, and in a visit to 'some gardens near the city,' where he spoke with equal freedom and sadness to his friend Barry, the Genoese banker,—regretting that he had not decided to go to England instead of Greece, and in his hopelessness for an enterprise, that had commenced so inauspiciously, declaring that 'nothing but a devoted sense of



duty and honour prevented him from relinquishing his rash purpose at the last moment.' In the evening of the same day (the 15th of July), having again set sail, Byron soon recovered his spirits and went merrily over the wide waters. 'In the breeze,' says Moore, 'that now bore him towards his beloved Greece, the voice of his youth seemed again to speak. Before the titles of hero, of benefactor, to which he now aspired, that of poet, however pre-eminent, faded into nothing. His love of freedom, his generosity, his thirst for the new and adventurous,—all were re-awakened; and even the bodings that still lingered at the bottom of his heart but made the course before him more precious from his consciousness of its brevity, and from the high and self-ennobling resolution he had now taken to turn what yet remained of it gloriously to account.' Moore is comically wrong in most of the statements of this bit of melodramatic story. Byron did not spend the 14th of July in the offing, within sight of Genoa, but spent the day on shore. He did not pass the night of the 14th at sea, but either in bed on shore or in a motionless berth in harbour. He did not distinguish himself by activity in a storm off Genoa; the 'Hercules' was not damaged by a storm;—there was no storm to injure the vessel, or afford the poet an occasion for displaying his intrepidity in danger, and the singular steadiness of his lame feet on a rocking deck. Instead of relanding at six a.m. on the 15th July he was just then towed out of port by American boats. Instead of spending the 15th of July at the Casa Saluzzi and 'some gardens near the city' he spent it at sea. Instead of re-landing *once* only, he returned to shore *twice*, after sleeping on board the 'Hercules.'

Dissatisfied in this matter with the personal historian, to whose imagination she was indebted for so many of her facts, to whose pages she was indebted for nine-tenths of her anecdotes about Byron, the Marquise de Boissy heightens the dramatic interest and multiplies the romantic incidents of Moore's sufficiently sensational account of the poet's departure from Genoa. Not content with a single imaginary storm, the lady insists there were two on successive nights. 'It is also known how,' she says (*vide* 'My Recollections,' Vol. II. pp. 34, 35), 'being driven back into port by a storm, he resolved on visiting the palace of Albaro; and it may well be imagined that the hours passed in this dwelling, then silent and deserted, must have seemed like those that count as years of anguish in the life of great and feeling souls, among whom visions of the future float before the over-excited mind. . . . The night which followed this gloomy day again saw Lord Byron struggling



against stormy waves, and not only determined on pursuing his voyage, but also on appearing calm and serene to his fellow-travellers.' On page 93 of the same volume, the storm that 'drove' rises to the 'tempest that cast him back.' 'When hardly out of port from Genoa,' says the aged Teresa, 'a tempest cast him back. He landed, and resolved on visiting the abode he had left in such anguish the day before. While climbing the hill of Albaro the darkest presentiment took possession of his soul. "Where shall we be this day next year?" said he to Count Gamba, who was walking by his side.'

The simple facts of the departure are these. The horses having been shipped and all the freight of the 'Hercules' put on board by the evening of the 13th of July, Byron (with his 'suite,' *i.e.* Pietro Gamba, the unfledged medical student Bruno, Fletcher the valet, Lega the Secretary, and three or four stablemen) and Trelawny (with his 'suite' of a single negro) slept on board, after going to their berths with the hope that at daybreak they would be starting for Leghorn. On the morning of the 14th, there being no breath of wind to move the lumbering ship onwards, the poet and his party went on shore for the day. Weighing anchor at daylight on the 15th, the 'Hercules' with the full complement of adventurers was towed out of the bay by boats sent, in complaisance to the poet, by American ships to render him that service. The calm continuing, the 'Hercules' lay all day in the offing 'like a log upon the main under the broiling sun; the Italians skipping about, gesticulating, and chattering like wild monkeys in a wood,' whilst (*vide* Trelawny's capital book) 'the Pilgrim sat apart, solemn and sad,' taking no notice of any one or anything. Freshening towards midnight, the sea-breeze tumbled the waters, and rose so much that it was necessary to shorten sail, when the no longer nimble and vociferous Italians had crept off to their holes and corners, to enjoy the sickness of the occasion. At this crisis the horses, ill secured and frightened by the vessel's motion, kicked down the flimsy partitions, and would probably have lashed out with their heels at one another, had not Trelawny and *his* 'suite' (the negro) looked after the animals. The poet—with tottering legs on *terra firma*, and no legs at all on a rocking deck—could of course only thank Trelawny for the timely service, in which he could not share. 'We must bear up for port or we shall lose our cattle!' said the Cornish gentleman, who in no proper sense of the word was one of his friend's 'suite.' 'Do as you like,' was Byron's answer;—the four monosyllables being the whole of his contribution to the measure for abating a difficulty, that might have resulted in harm to the horses, but never for an

instant put the ship in danger. The 'Hercules' sustained no damage from the gale, which only raised Trelawny's spirits; and had it not been for the necessity of reconstructing the horse-boxes, the ship would have gone onwards to Leghorn. Having enjoyed his laughter at the doleful appearance of those of his land-lubbers, who had made the most of the opportunity for turning sick, Byron, after re-entering harbour, went on shore, for the *second time*, whilst the helpful Trelawny went to work with two or three English carpenters, and in a few hours put up sufficient boxes. 'In the evening' (of July 16th), says Trelawny, 'we took a fresh departure, and, *the weather continuing fine*, we had no other delay than that which arose from the bad sailing qualities of our vessel.'—So much for Moore's 'storm' and Teresa's 'tempest.'

Moore calls attention to the fact (?) that, notwithstanding his superstitious dislike of Friday as an unlucky day, the poet—who would not make a first call upon a new acquaintance on Friday, for fear of the consequences, and from the same motive returned upon the hands of a Genoese tailor the coat which the tradesman delivered on the inauspicious day—set sail for Greece on a Friday. As he was in error respecting the day of the month, possibly Moore was also mistaken respecting the particular day of the week, on which the 'Hercules' eventually began her voyage to Greek waters. Anyhow folk-lore was so far discredited by the event, that the biographer might as well have been silent about the matter. Whatever the day of its commencement, the voyage of the 'Hercules' (to Cephalonia), though tedious, was fairly fortunate.

Making some twenty miles in the twenty-four hours, the torpid craft came in five days to Leghorn, where Mr. Hamilton Brown and two Greeks (suspected of being spies) joined the party, whilst the vessel was taking in gunpowder and English goods. Clearing out of Leghorn on the 24th—the day on which Byron received the verses from Goethe and wrote the German poet a prompt acknowledgment of the courtesy—the 'Hercules' proceeded to the Ionian Isles by an irregular course, in order that Byron, who had never seen a volcanic mountain, might enlarge his observation of natural phenomena at Stromboli. But nature declined to satisfy the curiosity of the poet, though he lay off the island for a whole night, looking in vain towards the volcano for an emission of fire. On nearing Greek waters it was matter of debate with the principal voyagers, whether they should go to Zante, where Byron expected to find Blaquière, or to Cephalonia, where there was a governor favourable to the Greek cause; the question being eventually decided in accord-

ance with the advice of Hamilton Browne, who, speaking from his knowledge of the Ionian Islands and their residents, was urgent that the 'Hercules' should make for Argostoli. The choice was fortunate. At Zante the voyagers would not have met Blaqui re, who had started for England without awaiting Byron's arrival. Lying off Cephalonia, they enjoyed the sympathy of an English circle whose members vied with one another in showing respect for the poet, and also of a Governor (Colonel, afterwards Sir C. J. Napier) who was disposed to further their objects to the utmost of an ability, that was limited by official obligations.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### CEPHALONIA.

Byron's Delight at seeing Greece again—Blaqui re's Departure for England—The Voyage from Leghorn to Argostoli—The Poet's Demeanour on board the 'Hercules'—His alternate Sadness and Hilarity—His Gossip with Trelawny—King of Greece—William Parry—The Excursion to Ithaca—Shattered Nerves and Broken Health—Byron's Life at Metaxata—His Disputations with Dr. Kennedy—His Motives for lingering in Cephalonia—Policy and Indolence.

LEAVING Leghorn (where the 'Hercules' stayed for two days, taking in gunpowder and other stores) on July 24, 1823, when he was well within nine months of his death, Byron sighted Cephalonia and Zante on the 2nd of August. Shortly after he had viewed the islands, the adventurer, pointing towards the Morea, said to Trelawny, 'I don't know why it is, but I feel as if the eleven long years of bitterness I have passed through since I was here were taken off my shoulders, and I was scudding through the Greek Archipelago with old Bathurst, in his frigate.' Anchoring in the roadstead for the night, the 'Hercules' entered the harbour of Argostoli on the following morning. On learning that Blaqui re without awaiting his arrival, in accordance with their arrangement and the requirements of courtesy, was on his way back to England, Byron could not conceal his vexation. 'Now, they have got me thus far,' he exclaimed bitterly to Trelawny in reference to the London Committee, 'they think I must go on, and they care nothing as to the result. They are deceived. I won't budge a foot further until I see my way; we will stay here; if that is objected to, I will buy an island from the Greeks or Turks; there must be plenty of them in the market.'



For the particulars of the voyage from Genoa to Cephalonia, the readers of this memoir should refer to Trelawny's 'Records,'—perhaps the most interesting and suggestive of all the numerous books about the poet. In the earlier stage of the voyage (from Genoa to Leghorn), Byron, unusually silent and serious, with a countenance indicative of strenuous effort to conceal melancholy emotion, passed his time chiefly on deck at the stern of the vessel, sometimes occupied with his own anxious thoughts, sometimes reading Scott's 'Life of Swift,' Colonel Hippesley's 'Expedition to South America,' Grimm's 'Correspondence,' or Rochefoucauld. The fellow-voyagers messed on deck, and most of them slept on deck.—At Leghorn the poet was provided with more literature,—English newspapers and reviews, and the recently published first volume of Las Cases' 'Memoirs of Napoleon.' After leaving Leghorn he suffered even more visibly from dejection than in the earlier days of sailing. 'It was not,' says Trelawny, 'until we had been some days fairly at sea, with no land to look back upon, that the Pilgrim regained something of his self-command.'

Suffering nothing from the motion of the vessel, that rocked and rolled in its tardy progress as though it had been 'built to roll,' he improved gradually in health and spirits till he could say to his most familiar comrade, 'I am better now than I have been for years.' Daily at noon he went overboard for a long swim, the one and favourite muscular exercise in which he could compete with his fellows on equal terms. 'It was the only exercise he had, for he could not walk on deck,' Trelawny says of the man, who is described by the most imaginative of his historians as running about on board and tackling unruly horses during a violent gale. Every day he played with his pistols, firing at empty bottles and live poultry (notwithstanding his old vow never again to shoot a bird). Once and again, he and Trelawny and the brig's captain whiled away the time with ghost stories and superstitious tales of strange presentiments. There were times of elation when he laughed heartily and perpetrated practical jokes that made the sailors roar with glee till their sides cracked. For instance, whilst the big-bellied captain was taking his midday nap, Byron got possession of the seaman's bright scarlet waistcoat, and induced Trelawny to join him in trying whether the gorgeous piece of raiment could not be made to hold both of them at the same time. 'Now,' he cried with a schoolboy's boisterous hilarity, 'put your arm in, Tre, and we will jump overboard, and take the shine out of it.' Coming on deck in time to see his splendid garment thus dishonoured by the 'Siamese swimmers,' to the riotous delight of the shouting

crew, Captain Scott (given to talk of his freight as '*frite*') exclaimed passionately, 'My Lord, you should know better than to make a mutiny on board ship. I won't heave to, or lower a boat. I hope you'll both be drowned.' To which threat Byron cried out from the water, 'Then you'll lose your *frite*!'—a reminder that doubtless made the captain of the '*Hercules*' more careful for his freight than his waistcoat. But such exhibitions of gaiety were the occasional breaks of sunshine in a gloomy April. Even in these passages of joyousness the poet was likely at any instant to drop away to despondency and the weakness of womanish grief. 'I often saw Lord Byron during his last voyage from Genoa to Greece,' Hamilton Browne wrote to Colonel Stanhope, 'in the midst of the greatest gaiety suddenly become pensive, and his eyes fill with tears, doubtless from some painful remembrance. On these occasions he generally got up and retired to the solitude of his cabin.' During these last months of his existence, Byron's eyes often revealed the sorrow that combined with bodily sickness to kill him. Even as Hamilton Browne saw him weep on board the '*Hercules*,' Colonel Stanhope (afterwards Lord Harrington) often saw Byron at Missolonghi pass in a moment from the gaiety of light speech to the tears of untold misery. But alike in gloom and gladness, in his meditative moods and his fits of dejection, Byron was remarkable throughout the voyage for the qualities that commend a traveller to the kindly regard of his associates. 'I never,' Trelawny says emphatically, 'was on shipboard with a better companion than Byron; he was generally cheerful, gave no trouble, assumed no authority, uttered no complaints, and did not interfere with the working of the ship; when appealed to he always answered, "Do as you like."'

Though a chief, if not the main, purpose of his expedition to Greece was to show the world that he could do better things than make verses, there were occasions of the passage from Leghorn to Argostoli when, notwithstanding his avowals that he had done with literature, and his petulant expressions of dislike to being reminded of his literary celebrity, he spoke as though he would return to writing when he had done fighting. When he broke down, like a schoolboy set an impossible task, in his endeavour to 'perpetuate his verses on Tyranny,' at Trelawny's request, as they were slipping past the dungeons of Lonza, he observed, 'Give me time,—I can't forget the theme; but for this Greek business I should have been at Naples, writing a fifth canto of "*Childe Harold*," expressly to give vent to my detestation of the Austrian tyranny in Italy.' Subsequently he acted on Trelawny's suggestion that he should write a war-song for



the Greeks ;—producing the lost song that was seen after his death amongst his papers at Missolonghi by Trelawny, who made his lost copy of the verses at the same time when he made his published copy of the poet's last (unfinished) letter to his sister. After lying all night off Stromboli, watching for the fire which declined to show itself, the poet said to the same companion, 'If I live another year, you will see this scene in a fifth canto of "Childe Harold."' And weeks later, when Trelawny started from Cephalonia for the Morea, Byron's parting words to him were, 'Let me hear from you often,—come back soon. If things are farcical, they will do for "Don Juan;" if heroical, you shall have another canto of "Childe Harold."' But of all Byron's talk at sea about his literary doings the most noteworthy utterances were those that relate to what may be termed the egotistic mystifications of his personal story, that are so peculiar a feature of his writings ;—more especially the utterances that relate to the 'Dream' and the poems to 'Thyrza.' 'People say,' he observed to Trelawny, 'that I have told my own story in my writings: I defy them to point out a single act of my life by my poems, or even of my thoughts, for I seldom write what I think.' Of the 'Dream' he said, 'There is some truth as to detail in the "Dream," and in some of my shorter poems.' That there is much untruth as to the detail and main facts of the 'Dream' has been already shown in these pages. Respecting the poems to 'Thyrza,' he said, 'When I first left England I was gloomy. I said so in my first canto of "Childe Harold." I was then really in love with a cousin' ['Thyrza,' Trelawny remarks parenthetically, 'he was very chary of her name'], 'and she was in a decline.' On examining them with reference to what has been said about Thyrza in a former chapter, the reader will observe that, though they obscured the precise facts to Trelawny and were probably intended to mystify them and him, these words were consistent with the truth. In leaving England for the first time, Byron was in love with Margaret Parker in the manner set forth in that chapter. Margaret Parker, dead for years before the poet's first departure from England, *was* in a decline even to her death,—and to the poet's fancy *was* in decline, long after she was resting in the grave.—The Greek Expedition was fruitful of three interesting confessions for Byronic biographers ; (1) the poet's confession that Thyrza was a cousin who died of consumption ; (2) his avowal that the 'Dream' was truthful only in some of its details ; and (3) his admission, made in Cephalonia, that he knew the reasons of his wife's resolve to part from him,—the reasons that were too simple to be readily discovered.

Byron's German biographer, Karl Elze, calls it 'a painful and



undeniable truth,' that the poet's 'taking part in the work of the liberation of Greece did not so much arise from enthusiasm, or from a lofty impulse for liberty, or from a deeply rooted sympathy with the sufferings of the Greek people, still less from self-sacrificing courage, as from personal and by no means ideal feelings.' As he had come to the middle of his thirty-sixth year before sailing from Genoa, and had led a life peculiarly calculated to exhaust the generous sympathies, it would have been strange had the poet embarked for Greece in obedience to sentiments, that are seldom strongly operative in men who have survived the illusions and romantic hopefulness of youth. Instead of lamenting the absence of feelings, not to be looked for in a battered and embittered worldling of middle age and broken health, the biographer should rather have extolled the bravery that animated such a man to engage in an enterprise, requiring all the energies of his earlier and undiminished vigour. Other things might be urged to his credit respecting the frame of mind in which he started for Greece, and of his objects in an expedition so unsuited to his failing energies. Though recollections of former felicity caused him to regard Greece with a peculiar fondness, he had little liking and no respect for the people. 'I am of St. Paul's opinion,' he said, 'that there is no difference between the Jews and Greeks, the character of both being equally vile.' But though he regarded the Greeks thus disdainfully, their cause had his sincere approval; and whilst he nursed a far from sanguine hope for the cause, he believed that its triumph would in course of time have beneficial consequences in the condition and character of the people. In the contemplation of these consequences, there were moments when he could rise superior to selfish aims, and exclaim with sincerity, 'What signifies Self, if a single spark of that which would be worthy of the past can be bequeathed unquenchedly to the future.' In bare justice to a man, whose conspicuous failings were associated with conspicuous virtues, it must be admitted that no prospect of individual aggrandisement could ever have induced Byron to join in any battle which he believed to be a battle for the wrong,—or in any battle which he did not conscientiously think a battle for the right. Grateful to the land, that had inspired his genius at manhood's threshold and made him famous, he wished to repay the debt he owed to her story and natural loveliness by being of service to her degenerate people. At the same time he was moved by a desire for the glory that would purge his fame of the stains put upon it by evil behaviour, and would be accepted in England as a perfect atonement for all he had ever done to her displeasure. 'Like

all men educated as he had been,' says the well-informed writer (Bowring) of the article on 'Lord Byron in Greece,' that appeared in the 'Westminster Review' soon after the poet's death, 'Lord Byron too often probably obeyed the dictates of impulse, and threw up the reins to passion which he had never been taught the necessity of governing; but the world are under a grievous mistake if they fancy that Lord Byron embarked for Greece with the ignorant ardour of a schoolboy, or the flighty fanaticism of a crusader. *It appeared to him that there was a good chance of his being useful in a country which he loved—a field of honourable distinction was open to him,* and doubtless he expected to derive no mean gratification from witnessing so singular and instructive a spectacle as the emancipation of Greece.' It follows that, in respect to the motives which actuated him towards Greece, Byron is less comparable with those few and sublime Liberators whose services to the victims of oppression proceeded from enthusiastic and absolutely disinterested devotion to Freedom, than with those royal Pretenders who in fighting for a crown have been animated by selfish as well as philanthropic motives.

There is another reason for rating him with the nobler candidates for dynastic eminence, rather than with the sublimely unselfish Liberators to whom he was likened by his fervid eulogists in the times following closely on his death. For if he did not embark at Genoa with a hope that the expedition, on which he started with scanty information and indefinite views, would make him the sovereign of Free Greece, it is certain that either during the passage from Leghorn to Cephalonia, or at the latest soon after his arrival at Argostoli, the hope had a place in his view of the possible consequences of the revolution. Reference has been already made to the two Greeks who joined the party on board the 'Hercules' at Leghorn—Prince Shilizzi, suspected of being a Russian spy, and Captain Vitaili, of whom it was rumoured that he was a spy in the service of the Porte. On learning the rumours respecting his guests for the passage to the Ionian Islands, Byron remarked lightly, 'And a fair sample too of the ancient as well as the modern, if Mitford is to be believed.' By these two Greeks, whose dubious fame caused him so little concern, Byron was assured that most of the Greeks favoured monarchical government; and it is probable that the poet was indebted to their wily lips for his first pleasant fancy that the people, so wishful for a king, might invite him to be their sovereign—that he might exchange his coronet for a crown, and through Ada become the founder of a line of kings. Once offered to his mind, the flattering thought would not fail



to fascinate his imagination, and be fruitful of pleasant and even intoxicating anticipations. At Cephalonia he was also assured that the Greeks needed and wished for a king, whose influence would unite the chiefs, and give solidarity to a nation made up of tribes, that ever at fierce feud amongst themselves had no common sentiment but vindictive hatred of the Turk. 'If they make me the offer,' Byron observed lightly to Trelawny, either during or soon after the voyage from Leghorn, 'I may not refuse it. I shall take care of my own "sma' peculiar;" for if it don't suit my humour, I shall, like Sancho, resign.' Believing that Byron relished the suggestion, Trelawny also held a strong opinion that, had it not been for his death, the poet would have been invited to the throne of Greece. 'Byron,' says the author of the 'Records,' 'several times alluded to this in a bantering vein; it left an impression on his mind. Had he lived to reach the congress of Salona as commissioner of the loan, the dispenser of a million silver crowns would have been offered a golden one.'

There is no evidence how far Byron surrendered himself to a dream, so certain to gratify his pride, and delight his romantic spirit. Still less is there evidence that he deliberately entertained a purpose of making himself King of Greece. But whilst it cannot be doubted that Trelawny had reasonable grounds for his strong opinion on the matter, few persons will question that had the offer been made it would have been accepted. Most persons will hold it more than probable that, though he might not have died a king, had his life been prolonged for another decade, the poet would at least for a brief hour have borne the regal title and moved in kingly state, had he lived for another year. Byron's temper, his long-cherished ambition to astound the world by adventurous achievement outside literature, and the course of events in Greece, countenance this view of what was at least a possibility. It is significant to the matter that, in allying himself so closely with Prince Mavrocordatos, the poet associated himself with the chief, who was most influential with those of the Greeks who were favourably disposed to monarchy, and, at the same time, desired to have a foreigner for their king. It is (to use Dr. Elze's words) more than probable that conferences of a confidential character were held on this subject at Missolonghi. There is nothing incredible in the statement (made by the author of 'Parry's Last Days of Lord Byron') that the poet, with characteristic inability to keep his hopes altogether in his own breast and to guard all the secret purpose of his friends from discovery or at least from suspicion, ejaculated in an incautious moment to the whilom ship's carpenter



‘I have had offers that would surprise you, were I to tell you of them, and which would turn the head of any man less satiated than I am, and more desirous of possessing power than of contributing to freedom and happiness.’ The writer of the book from which these words are taken, insists that these offers (necessarily made by persons with questionable authority to make them) were rejected. Of course, Byron represented himself to have rejected them, if he was so imprudent and weak as to speak of them to the nominal author of the apocryphal memoir. But no reliance can be put on the assertions of the ‘Last Days’—a vamped-up performance that was probably put together and published by a politician, who after Byron’s death aimed at forcing his own views on Grecian affairs into consideration by the aid of the poet’s reputation. Originally a ship’s carpenter, afterwards a fireman at the Woolwich Arsenal, subsequently a captain of Mavrocordato’s creation, a few days later a Major by virtue of his own impudence, never a man of even the slightest education, and towards the close of his by no means creditable career an insatiable brandy-drinker, William Parry—a curious and rather piquant combination of impostor, buffoon, and sot—was incapable of writing the spurious book, for which he furnished some of the materials besides the name that figures on its title-page.

Byron was as good as the petulant words that escaped his lips on hearing that Blaquiére had gone for England, instead of remaining, as he should have done, to give him the latest intelligence and fullest possible information of affairs in the Morea. ‘I won’t budge a foot farther until I see my way!’ was the exclamation of the adventurer, who had learned the necessity for caution and precise knowledge of facts in revolutionary enterprise, from the miscarriage of Italian Carbonarism. The words were spoken in pique, but he acted on them stubbornly. Till he saw what to do, he would do nothing but gather intelligence, and study the position by means of the emissaries of rival parties and chiefs, who would not fail to flock to him, as soon as it was known that he was at Argostoli with a cargo of arms and gunpowder, and chests full of specie. Ready to play with a heavy stake, he was determined not to place his money, without first studying the table and observing the ways of the game. And notwithstanding all that has been urged or suggested to the contrary, his resolve was a wise one alike for Greece and himself. For the moment, knowledge was what he needed. Moving without it he might commit himself to the faction that he ought to be most careful to avoid, and instead of bringing the eastern and western tribes into united action might set them by the

ears. Having left Genoa, knowing no more of Greece and her affairs than was known to the members of the London Committee,—that is to say, knowing hardly anything about them,—he had arrived at the Islands with only the slightest information of the men and forces with whom he hoped to co-operate. Cephalonia would be a good place of observation. It would also be a fit station for negotiating with the Greek Government, to whom he had no intention of rendering assistance until it should be asked for. In Italy he offered his sword to the Neapolitan Government; in Greece he would not draw his sword till the Government had entreated him to do so. Arriving at Argostoli on the 3rd of August, 1823, he remained in Cephalonia till the 28th of December—a period that wanted only six days of five calendar months; the first five or six weeks of the term being spent chiefly on board the ‘Hercules’ by the adventurer who, crossing the harbour every afternoon to the rock from which he took his daily leap into the sea, went on shore every evening for horse exercise. On exchanging his narrow home on the water for roomier quarters on shore, Byron, still declining Colonel Napier’s offer of entertainment at the Residency, established himself in a house at Metaxata, a pleasant and picturesque village, some four or five miles distant from Argostoli.

Despatching messengers to Corfu and Missolonghi for information soon after his arrival at Argostoli, Byron determined to pass some of the time, that must elapse before the return of the agents, in an excursion to the island of Ithaca. Made in the company of Trelawny, Hamilton Browne, Pietro Gamba, little Dr. Bruno, together with one or two new acquaintances picked up at Cephalonia, and a few pleasure-seekers who were permitted to join the party in Ithaca, this excursion of eight days through the loveliest scenery and some of the most interesting haunts of the island, was fruitful of one or two incidents that indicate the variableness of Byron’s freakish temper, and the violence that often distinguished his demeanour at moments of trivial annoyance or severe bodily discomfort. ‘Received’ (according to Trelawny) ‘as if he had been a prince,’ Byron was delighted with the treatment accorded him by the principal inhabitants of the island, and throwing himself with boyish hilarity into the diversions of the progress, drank and feasted at the successive banquets provided for the tourists, as though he had neither fear nor knowledge of the tortures of dyspepsia. This imprudence had of course the usual consequences on the man of irritable temper and feeble digestion. After several exhibitions of petulance he indulged in a furious fit of rage at an incident that should only have caused him amusement, and endured on



the last night of the excursion one of those excruciating paroxysms of stomachic cramp, that in his later years used to make him scream and swear like a maniac. On being invited to inspect some of the localities of the island, such as Homer's School and the Stronghold of Ulysses, that are especially interesting to antiquaries, he ejaculated pettishly to Trelawny, 'Do I look like one of those emasculated fogies? Let's have a swim. I detest antiquarian twaddle. Do people think I have no lucid intervals, that I came to Greece to scribble mere nonsense? I will show them that I can do something better; I wish I had never written a line, to have it cast in my teeth at every turn.' Later in the same day, when he had taken a long swim and thoroughly fatigued himself with exertion, he fell asleep in the cave, where Ulysses is said to have deposited the presents of the Pheacians, and remained there whilst Pietro Gamba climbed to the ruins of the hero's castle,—an ascent which the poet was precluded by his lameness from making. 'I awoke him,' the Count Pietro says mildly, 'on my return, and he said that I had interrupted dreams more pleasant than ever he had before in his life.' The poet's regret for the disturbance was, however, couched in terms less courteous than vehement. 'Gamba,' says Trelawny, 'having nothing to do, hunted him out, and awakened him from a pleasant dream, for which the poet cursed him.'

After leaving Vathi, where he ate and drank of indigestible things more than would have been for his good, had the fare been fit for his squeamish and weak stomach, he climbed (in the saddle), with the rest of his party on foot, to the summit of the hill of Athos, to sleep at a monastery, where he was received with abundant hospitality and extravagant adulation by the chief of the religious brethren, whom Trelawny styles 'the Abbot.' Having conducted his chief guest to the great hall (illuminated for the occasion), where the poet was thronged by curious monks, whilst boys in ecclesiastical costume swung censers of burning frankincense under his nose, this dignitary of the Church, after performing divers ceremonies, was reading from a paper scroll an address of fulsome flattery to the 'Lordo Inglese,' when, to the consternation of the English spectators, no less than to the amazement of the orator in sacerdotal vestments, the Lordo, to whose glory so many extravagant things were being uttered, flew into a tempestuous rage, cursed the Abbot in vigorous Italian, and then seizing a lamp rushed with it from the chamber of audience, exclaiming to his astonished fellow-tourists, 'Will no one release me from the presence of these pestilential idiots? they drive me mad!' This outbreak



was doubtless due to the attack of indigestion that, provoked by the poet's recent indiscretions in diet, had been coming upon him for some hours. From the loose notes of the two slightly discordant and obscure eye-witnesses and historians of the evening's proceedings, it appears that before the poet went to sleep he was driven so wild by stomachic agony as to tear his clothes, and hurl oaths and furniture at those who ventured to approach him with offers of assistance. In his torture Byron filled the house of religion with riot and alarm. Driving poor little Dr. Bruno from his presence with volleys of fierce and untranslatable execrations, the victim of acute dyspepsia barricaded his chamber with chairs and a table, so that he might yell and suffer in solitude. A council was held on what should be done for the patient's relief and safety. After a brief visit to the scene of noise and disorder, Trelawny returned only to say he could do nothing for the sufferer, who seemed likely to wreck all the furniture of his room, and was so violent and strong in his frenzy that ten men would find it difficult to hold him. On forcing his way through the obstructions put against the inward side of the door, one of the historians of the affair (the author of the 'Conversations with Lord Byron,' printed as an appendix to Charles Mackay's 'Medora Leigh') saw the poet, standing half undressed in a distant corner of the room, desperate and dangerous, like a hunted animal at bay. Roaring and screaming harshly, 'Bah! out of my sight! fiends, can I have no peace, no relief from this hell? Leave me, I say;' the sufferer seized a chair and hurled it at the intruder's head. The attack, however, was less long than sharp. Volunteering to make an attempt to pacify the furious dyspeptic, Hamilton Browne, armed with two pills (one of powerful cathartic, the other of anodyne medicine), went to him, and more fortunate than Bruno and Trelawny, induced him to take the medicines. Soon Byron was sleeping tranquilly. The next day, appearing with a countenance expressive of sadness and concern, and with his pleasantest manner, he conciliated his companions by a gentle and winning demeanour, that seemed to offer them unspoken apologies for having caused them so much trouble on the previous night. Something more than twenty-four hours later, when the poet had returned to Argostoli and had passed another night on board the 'Hercules,' Trelawny on entering his friend's cabin, to speak with him on urgent business, was witness of another scene, miserably eloquent of the nervous derangement and exhaustion of the adventurer who had brought only the wreck of an irretrievably shattered constitution to Greece, for the accomplishment of an under-

taking that would have tried severely the energies and endurance of a robust soldier in the plenitude of his physical powers. Though it was near noon, Byron was sound asleep, with his pistols and Bible in their usual place on a chair, near the head of his bed. To arouse the sleeper it was necessary for Trelawny to call him by name repeatedly in a loud voice. Starting with a show of lively terror when he had been brought back to consciousness, and staring wildly at his visitor, Byron ejaculated after a convulsive sigh, 'I have had such a dream! I am trembling with fear! I am not fit to go to Greece. If you had come to strangle me I could have done nothing.' 'Who could,' was Trelawny's cheery answer, 'against a nightmare? The hag don't mind your pistols and Bible!'

Chafing at what he thought Byron's irresoluteness, which was in truth a policy of inaction for a definite purpose, Trelawny determined to start at once for the Morea and cross the country to Tripolitza, for the purpose of obtaining information and acting as a channel of communication between Byron and the Greek Government. Partly from courtesy but chiefly from natural reluctance to lose so congenial a companion, Byron for a short time resisted this resolve with entreaties for his friend to stay by his side, till the fit moment should arrive for them to go together to the scene of action; but finding Trelawny bent on going his way, with Hamilton Browne for his companion, he gave them letters of introduction to the Government, and on bidding them farewell was doubtless well pleased to feel that he had two emissaries working for him, whose intelligence he could receive with confidence alike in its discrimination and honesty. Soon after their departure Byron landed his stores, dismissed the 'Hercules,' and planting himself at Metaxata remained there for more than a quarter of a year.

It is not quite clear what Byron did with his time during this considerable period. Leaving readers to infer that his patron found abundant occupation in the affairs of his enterprise, Pietro Gamba remarks that 'it is easier to conceive than relate the various means employed to engage him in one faction or another;' and then, after alluding generally to the letters and messengers with which each of the rival factions assailed the English peer, Teresa Guiccioli's brother records that Byron 'occupied himself in discovering the truth, hidden as it was under these intrigues, and amused himself in confronting the agents of the different factions.' It is to be regretted that the Italian Count, almost the only man capable of informing the world fully about Byron's daily life at Metaxata, has left so much to the imagination. Larger communicativeness on the



part of so capable a witness would at least have rendered it easier to conceive the matters to which he refers so vaguely. Though Byron was usefully employed at the Cephalonian village and did well to defer his voyage to the mainland till he saw whither to go and what to do,—and though in respect to any private ambitions he may have cherished, he was unquestionably prudent in making the Greeks see he was capable of remaining a year where he was, or even of returning to England without doing anything in their behalf,—it is difficult to believe that he was fully and laboriously occupied in the matters indicated by Count Gamba. On the contrary, it is pretty obvious that without surrendering himself altogether to what Trelawny termed disdainfully ‘his old routine of dawdling habits, plotting—planning—shilly-shallying—and doing nothing,’ Byron led an indolent life at Cephalaria; albeit, Moore avers that whilst ‘pursuing his usual simple and uniform course of life’ on the island, the poet ‘rose for the despatch of business at an early hour, which showed how capable he was of conquering even long habit when necessary.’ Had business pressed so heavily upon him as Moore represents, he would scarcely have been (as the same biographer represents) accessible at all hours to such visitors as commonplace officers from the Argostoli garrison and other idlers from the town. His readiness to enter into the society of the little capital indicates that, whilst pleased by the courtesies of the military and civil circles, he had abundant leisure to enjoy and repay it. If he had not sometimes wanted pastime, he would scarcely have engaged in those rather trivial controversies with Dr. Kennedy, the pietistic regimental doctor, on the evidences and doctrines of Christianity,—disputations interesting only for their testimony that the poet was to the last a sceptic, whose wavering and superstitious mind never escaped altogether from the influence of the theology (in the Reverend William Harness’s opinion, the hurtful theology) imposed upon it in his childhood. Under the circumstances it is not strange that Teresa Guiccioli (remembering his marvellous power of withdrawing his mind from matters of the strongest interest and turning it to literary labour) imagined in her later time that the poet spent his leisure at Cephalaria in writing more cantos of ‘Don Juan’ and keeping a careful diary. That he wrote no such additional cantos is known from his last and petulant letter to Tom Moore (dated from Missolonghi, March 4, 1824), ‘I have not been quiet in an Ionian island, but much engaged in business, as the Greek deputies (if arrived) can tell you. Neither have I continued “Don Juan,” nor any other poem.’

To those who concur with Karl Elze in thinking that, instead



of lingering in Cephalonia whilst he insisted that the Greeks should dismiss their dissensions, and made their union and establishment of order the conditions of his assistance, Byron 'ought to have regarded it as an essential part of the work he had undertaken actively to co-operate in bringing about this union and order,' it may be fairly contended that, for several weeks after his arrival at Argostoli, he could not have taken a better course for drawing the rival chiefs and parties into the harmony requisite for effective action, than by remaining a vigilant observer of events without either committing or appearing to commit himself to the policy of any one of the several factions. Between the entreaties of Metaxa that he would hasten to the relief of Missolonghi, the entreaties of Colocotronis that he would appear at the congress of Salamis, and the entreaties of Mavrocordatos that he would come to him at Hydra, he did well to consider his position, and whilst weighing the arguments and sifting the representations of the contending claimants for his support, to reply to all of them, 'Make up your differences and act for the whole country instead of a fraction of it: I have come to help no one of you as a partisan, but all of you as a common friend; on touching your soil I must be welcomed as the Liberator of a United People.' But though he did well to avoid precipitate interference, it cannot be denied that he persisted too long in his policy of inaction, that he tarried at Metaxata when he should have been at Missolonghi, and that he insisted too severely on the immediate and total abatement of the internal dissensions, which Mavrocordatos declared, as early as the 21st October, would disappear as soon as means could be found to pay the fleets and armies. In truth, the time came when (to use the words of the judicious writer of the 'Westminster' article) he 'was too sensitive on this point and attached too great importance to these dissensions.' It is little to urge in Byron's behalf that the length of his stay in Cephalonia did Greece no harm, for it must be admitted that under the urgent circumstances his persistence in inactivity might have proved greatly injurious to the country. On the other hand, it is something to the disadvantage of his reputation that the inactivity, which might have been and only just missed being very prejudicial to Greece, was distinctly favourable to any personal ambition, of which he may be suspected, by enhancing his influence with the Greeks, whose desire for his aid and estimate of its value naturally rose with the difficulty of getting it. If Byron saw this consequence of his inaction, and speculated upon it craftily, he doubtless persuaded himself that the gain to his influence would in the long run be a gain to the country, to

which he was unquestionably desirous of rendering substantial service. Moreover, to account for the length of time that elapsed between his determination to go to Missolonghi and his departure from Metaxata, some allowance must be made for the habitual dilatoriness of the poet, who used to say with more of self-complacence than shame that, if he stayed six days in a place, he required six months to get out of it.

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## CHAPTER XXV.

### MISSOLOGHI.

The Mistico and the Bombard at Sea—Their Adventures on the Passage—Byron's enthusiastic Reception at Missolonghi—Marco Botzaris's Suliotes—The Birthday Ode—The Poet's Behaviour at Missolonghi—His Differences with Colonel Stanhope—The Failure of his Health—His successive Epileptic Seizures—Lady Byron's Letter—The Poet's Unfinished Letter to Augusta—Exasperating Incidents and Gloomy Circumstances—The Rivalry of Odysseus and Mavrocordatos—Negotiations for the Congress of Salona—The Poet's Fatal Illness—His Last Moments and Last Words—The Funeral at Hucknall-Torkard.

HAVING hired two Ionian vessels—the slight and fast-sailing mistico, in which the poet made the voyage with sixteen thousand dollars on board; and the heavy bombard, in which Pietro Gamba had charge of the horses, the London Committee's stores, the larger part of the poet's munitions, and eight thousand dollars—Byron sailed from Cephalonia on the 28th of December, 1823. Touching at Zante, where the poet transacted pecuniary business with Mr. Barff, the two vessels proceeded on their voyage on the evening of the 29th, hoping to reach Missolonghi within four-and-twenty hours, the wind being favourable, the sky clear, and the air fresh without being sharp. With the exception of Byron, who was suffering from dejection, the two parties were in excellent spirits, cheering one another with patriotic songs as long as such interchange of feeling was possible, and then parting company with signals, made by firing pistols and carabines,—‘To-morrow we meet at Missolonghi—to-morrow.’ The hope, however, was not fulfilled. There was danger on the deep for both ships. Passing within pistol-shot of a Turkish frigate, who mistaking her for a Greek *brûlot* feared to fire upon her, the mistico, escaping capture to fall in with foul weather and imminent peril of being wrecked on the Scrofes, came safe to the waters of Missolonghi on the evening of

January 4, 1824, whither the slow bombard had arrived a few hours earlier, after having been captured by the Turks (of the same Turkish frigate, that might so easily have captured the *mistico*), taken as a prize into Patras, and released under rather droll circumstances by His Highness Yussuff Pacha.

On the following morning (January 5, 1824), Byron, wearing a scarlet coat—made probably on the pattern of the general's uniform that has imparted brilliance to earlier pages of this narrative—landed at Missolonghi to the tempestuous delight of the western chiefs, who saw in his arrival a great advantage for their province and party as well as for their country; of the mob of ill-clothed, ill-fed, and long-unpaid soldiers who looked to the 'Lordo Inglese' for a better time in respect to rations and money; and of the populace of the dirty and unwholesome little town, relieved by the Lordo's advent from the fear of despoliation and massacre,—from the dread of seeing their houses sacked by mutinous Greeks or seized by victorious Turks. Greeted with wild music, vehement acclamations, and salvos of artillery, Byron passed from the waterside through an enthusiastic multitude to the house prepared for his reception, in front of which Mavrocordatos surrounded by a brilliant body of officers welcomed him with all the marks of respect that would have been rendered to him had he been a prince. The demonstration of universal gladness and homage,—a demonstration alike effective by picturesqueness and enthusiasm,—could not fail to gratify the vanity and pride of the poet who, if he had lost the freshness and hopeful fervour, retained the nervous sensibility and emotional temperament of his earlier time. If he had sailed from Genoa without enthusiasm, he entered Missolonghi radiant with delight and glowing with triumph. On the morrow his ceremonious levee was thronged by the chiefs of Western Greece who rendered their homage to the Liberator of their country in a manner, that may well have seemed prophetic to the poet of the coming time, when they would no less cordially render homage to him as their King.

If Byron played for a crown, it must be admitted that for some weeks he played it worthily,—with spirit and discretion, energy and tact. Catching the fire of the prevalent enthusiasm, he went (to use the expression of a sympathetic and admiring witness of his behaviour) *soldier-mad*. Surrounding himself with a body-guard of five hundred of Marco Botzaris's Suliotes, all of whom had fought in some whilst several of them had fought in all the famous chieftain's thirty victories, he busied himself in reducing them to discipline, and found his daily exercise in training them for bolder and more hazardous exploits.



It was his hope that these savage warriors would march with him against stone walls as fearlessly and triumphantly as they had followed Botzaris in the open field. To win their confidence he astonished them with exhibitions of his dexterity with the pistol. Accepting the office of Commander-in-Chief (the *grandiose* title of 'Archistrategos' causing him no little amusement together with some pride) of the three thousand men appointed for the expedition against Lepanto, he spoke to his friends of the military enterprise, that chiefly held his attention from his first arrival in Greece till the middle of February, with equal enthusiasm and coolness,—insisting on the good results to be anticipated from a display of martial daring on the semi-barbaric soldiers under his command; and impressing his hearers not more by his words than his manner, that, whilst bent on figuring conspicuously in the assault of the stronghold, whose capture would go far to give the Greeks perfect possession of the Morea and to place them in a position to enter on offensive operations in the field, he was scarcely more desirous of victory than of death. 'Lord Byron,' Colonel Stanhope wrote of the 14th of January, 1824, 'burns with military ardour and chivalry, and will accompany the expedition to Lepanto.'

Whilst he still tasted the first delights of military excitement, and had scarcely entered on the series of vexatious and disheartening occurrences, which soon made him realize his constitutional unfitness and physical incompetence for the arduous undertaking to which he had committed himself under the whole world's observation, Byron wrote the familiar verses on the thirty-sixth anniversary of his birthday,—verses which, though closely subsequent events gave them a peculiarly pathetic significance, are so unworthy of his genius and so redundant of his pettiest infirmities, that they would not be brought to especial notice on the present occasion, were it not for the biographic value of the stagey and curiously egotistical performance:—

'Tis time this heart should be unmoved,  
 Since others it hath ceased to move;  
 Yet though I cannot be beloved,  
 Still let me love!

'My days are in the yellow leaf;  
 The flowers and fruits of love are gone;  
 The worm, the canker, and the grief  
 Are mine alone!

'The fire that in my bosom preys  
 Is lone as some volcanic isle;  
 No torch is kindled at the blaze—  
 A funeral pile!

- ‘The hope, the fear, the jealous care,  
The exalted portion of the pain  
And power of love, I cannot share,  
But wear the chain !
- ‘But ’tis not *thus*—and ’tis not *here*—  
Such thoughts should shake my soul, nor *now*,  
Where glory decks the hero’s bier,  
Or binds his brow.
- ‘The sword, the banner, and the field,  
Glory and Greece, around me see !  
The Spartan, borne upon his shield,  
Was not more free.
- ‘Awake ! (not Greece—she *is* awake !)  
Awake, my spirit ! Think through *whom*  
Thy life-blood tracks its parent lake,  
And then strike home !
- ‘Tread those reviving passions down,  
Unworthy manhood !—unto thee  
Indifferent should the smile or frown  
Of beauty be.
- ‘If thou regret’st thy youth, *why live* ?  
The land of honourable death  
Is here :—up to the field, and give  
Away thy breath !
- ‘Seek out—less often sought than found—  
A soldier’s grave, for thee the best ;  
Then look around, and choose thy ground,  
And take thy rest.’

Offered to the world at a moment when every home in England had a mourner in it weeping for the dead poet, when men were framing generous apologies for his shortcomings, when the women of his nation (even Ada’s mother, and Allegra’s mother) were recalling his feverish and unhappy career with tenderness, when journalists who for years had magnified his failings could remember nothing of him but his virtues and misfortunes, when death had given the verses a quality of sacredness,—it is not surprising that the best critics and connoisseurs applauded the lines for their sincerity, pathos, dignity and music. But now that Byron is far enough away from the present to be judged dispassionately, another view is taken of the poem that, with the exception of the single line—

‘If thou regret’st thy youth, *why live* ?’

contains nothing to moderate the general distaste for its foppish egotism and melodramatic falseness. Greece and her cause are nothing more than a stage provided with a couch on which the actor proposes to make a pretty ending, to the admiration of a crowded house who are reminded how he killed the girls and

thrilled the boys when his looks were at their best. Some fourteen years earlier, the poet, on his return to Athens, looking more than usually delicate from the fever that had prostrated him at Patras, remarked to the young Marquis of Sligo, after regarding himself in a mirror, 'How pale I look! I should like, I think, to die of a consumption; because then the women would all say, "See that poor Byron,—how interesting he looks in dying!"' Moore was right in attaching importance to the anecdote, as an illustration of 'the poet's consciousness of his own beauty,' and of 'the habitual reference of his imagination to that sex, which, however he affected to despise it, influenced more or less the colour of all his thoughts.' The Byron who wrote his dying song, thinking of the smile and frown of beauty, was the same Byron who, as he gazed on the looking-glass, wished the women to say of him, 'How interesting he looks in dying!'

Had he steadily played the sublime coxcomb to Mavrocordatos and the Greek chiefs, as he played the part in his dying poem to the British public, Byron's chance of the crown would have been a poor one, even though he had kept his health and gone to the Congress of Salona. But no two characters could be more unlike than the sentimental dandy of the Birthday Ode and the sober, discreet, and studiously courteous man of affairs who, whether he was required to mediate between angry chieftains or advise the government on nice matters of policy, spoke with the good sense, persuasive firmness, and conciliatory tact of a practised statesman. Excellent in everything, his conduct during this final act of his life's drama was especially commendable for the care he took to control his impetuous temper,—the efforts which he made to be his own master in this important particular being probably a chief cause of the sudden derangement of his nervous system, that preceded the fatal attack of fever. In his frequent conflicts with Colonel Stanhope—especially in those of them that had reference to the establishment of the printing-press and a political paper, a question on which both disputants felt warmly—Byron's command of his baneful irritability was surprising. The good sense and good argument of the frequent discussions on the Colonel's pet project were altogether on the side of the whilom professional author, who when the talk grew dangerously emphatic more than once retired adroitly from the wordy battle under the cover of a piquant pleasantry. 'It is strange,' he remarked on one of these occasions, 'that whilst Stanhope, the soldier, is all for writing the Turks down, I, the writer, am all for fighting them down.' At the very moment of his first epileptic seizure, he was playfully declaring his belief



that 'after all, the author's brigade would be ready before the soldier's printing-press.' In the end Byron yielded for the sake of peace, and after subsidising one of the Colonel's organs (the Greek paper), is said to have promised contributions to another of them (the polyglot journal), which attacked the project for electing a king in a manner that must have nettled Byron greatly, if he was in his heart aspiring to the kingship. In his desire to keep on the friendliest footing with the military advocate of the press, whom he opposed so firmly, Byron concluded one of their conferences by saying with affectionate impulsiveness, 'Give me that honest right hand ;' and another of them by exclaiming earnestly, 'Judge me by my actions, not my words.' In other ways he showed similar care for the feelings of persons of inferior importance. Indeed, the only person who seems to have had reason to complain of his irritability in Greece was the Count Pietro Gamba, whom he assailed on a comparatively trivial matter—the expenditure of a few hundred dollars on red cloth and oilskin—with a frequency and bitterness that almost seemed to indicate a desire to discover ground for serious quarrel with Teresa Guiccioli's brother. 'He was constantly attacking Count Gamba,' says Colonel Stanhope, 'sometimes, indeed, playfully, but more often with the bitterest satire, for having purchased for the use of his family, while in Greece, 500 dollars' worth of cloth. This he used to mention as an instance of the Count's imprudence and extravagance. Lord Byron told me one day, with a tone of great gravity, that this 500 dollars would have been most serviceable in promoting the siege of Lepanto ; and that he never would, to the last moment of his existence, forgive Gamba for having squandered away his money in the purchase of cloth.'

The agreeable excitements of Byron's first fortnight at Missolonghi were followed by vexations that sorely tried his temper, and mortifications that caused him to anticipate more serious misfortune. Five weeks of these irritating and melancholy experiences were enough to affect the poet's health to a degree, which made it manifest to all observers that he had not the physical stamina for the task on which he had entered. Indeed, before the end of the first fortnight the man of failing energy was profoundly troubled by an incident that shook his confidence in the soldiers nearest his person ;—a riot, attended with the loss of several lives, that originated in a dispute between a party of Suliotes, who wanted quarters, and a burgher of the town, who refused them admittance to his house. Ere long Byron discovered worse qualities than turbulence in the soldiers,—his 'lads,' as he began by calling them,—whom he had taken into

peculiar favour and personal patronage. Soon after Parry's long-awaited arrival on February 5, 1824, with the two mountain howitzers, the sixty-one 100lb. casks of gunpowder, and the other munitions needful for the capture of Lepanto—when the brigade of artillery was almost ready for service, and Byron hoped in another week to be master of the stronghold, or the tenant of a soldier's grave—the Suliotes, who had been tampered with by the agents of Colocotronis, made a demand for better terms,—one of their requirements being for a month's payment in advance. Their demands being answered by concessions, which only stimulated their insolence and greed, the treacherous rascals, discovering fresh grievances, insisted that two of their number should be made generals, two should be made colonels, two should be made captains, and that there should be a further creation of inferior officers, that would have raised one hundred and fifty of the much less than five hundred men above the rank of common soldiers. To so impudent a demand there was only one answer. Telling them he would still continue the allowances for the support of their families, so that women and children should not be punished for the fault of their husbands and fathers, Byron told the Suliotes (through Pietro Gamba) that he had ceased to be their chief, and they had ceased to be his soldiers. This rupture was the affair of the 14th of February. Byron's firmness had the results to be anticipated in the savage and servile Greeks,—immediate submission and simulated penitence. But though he took them back into his pay and nominal service on the following morning (the 15th), it was not in his power to take them again into his favour and confidence. It was obvious that Marco Botzaris's Suliotes were not the men their foreign chief had imagined them. Some days later these fellows, brave as lions in the open field, but unmanageable as wolves in the town, 'declined marching against Lepanto, saying that "they would not fight against stone walls!"'

The conduct of the Suliotes troubled Byron profoundly. But he made a strong effort to conceal his mortification at an affair that was the first of the series of blows which laid him on the bed of death. The Suliotes had barely made their submission, and received his pardon, when on the evening of February 15, 1824, whilst he was sitting in Colonel Stanhope's room, and declaring that '*after all*, the author's brigade would be ready before the soldier's printing-press,' he had his first epileptic seizure, in the presence of the several witnesses to the efforts he made to regain his self-command, on the subsidence of the convulsions. On recovering his power of speech, he said, 'Let me know, do not think I am afraid to die. I am not.' The attack



was sharp, but short ;—though brief it was ominous in a man of his age who had never before suffered from epilepsy. Losing his consciousness for only a few minutes, he seems to have come fairly out of the fit in twenty minutes. Indeed, Fletcher in one of his letters speaks of the fit as having run its course ‘in a quarter of an hour.’ Anyhow, he had quite recovered his senses in time to receive the first rumour of the false report, that the Suliotes were in arms, and about to attack the seraglio, for the purpose of seizing the magazines ;—a report that probably steadied and strengthened the invalid’s nerve, whilst it caused his friends to hasten to the arsenal to get the artillerymen under arms. On the following day, when he was lying on his bed, after being freely leeches to lessen the feeling of dull heaviness about the temples, his nerves received another alarm from the Suliotes, who covered with dirt and picturesque clothing burst into his presence, brandishing their costly arms, and demanding justice and right. Byron’s behaviour at this moment of trial had the admiration of Colonel Stanhope, who witnessed the scene and knew as well as any officer, trained in Indian service, how a superior soldier should bear himself to an armed mob. ‘Lord Byron,’ the Colonel wrote, ‘electrified by this unexpected act, seemed to recover from his sickness; and the more the Suliotes raged, the more his calm courage triumphed. The scene was truly sublime.’ Every reader of the Byronic biographies has heard of this epileptic attack. A fact less generally known is that this seizure (of the fifteenth of February) was the first of a series of attacks. In one of his letters Fletcher speaks of a second and slighter paroxysm. The valet does not speak of other subsequent attacks. Possibly he was not aware of their occurrence. It is, however, certain that there was a third, a fourth, and yet another seizure before the end of February. After describing the first seizure, the well-informed writer of the ‘Westminster’ (1824) article on ‘Lord Byron in Greece’ says, ‘In the course of the month the attack was repeated four times.’ In fact, the poet had five epileptic fits within thirteen days.

Byron was in the midst of these ominous and quickly successive seizures, when he wrote the unfinished letter to his sister, which Trelawny found at Missolonghi, together with a copy (?) of a letter from Lady Byron to her sister-in-law. Trelawny, who did well to take copies of the two documents, was strangely forgetful when he styled the unfinished letter (dated February 23, 1824) ‘the last of Byron’s writings.’ The poet busied himself with his pen during the next six or seven weeks ; several of the epistles, written by his hand in March and April,



being given in Moore's 'Life.' The author of the 'Records' would have been nearer the truth had he styled it the last of the poet's deeply interesting writings.

Towards the close of his sojourn at Metaxata, Byron had been troubled by intelligence that Ada was suffering from illness occasioned by determination of blood to the head; and Lady Byron's letter was written in answer to questions, which he seems to have put to her *through* Augusta, respecting the child's health and character. Lady Byron's letter ran thus:—

‘*Hastings, December 1823.*

‘MY DEAREST AUGUSTA,—I will now answer those passages from Lord Byron's letter of December 8th, which required information from me.

‘Ada's prevailing characteristic is cheerfulness, a disposition to enjoyment; this happy disposition was only partially interrupted when at the most oppressive period of her illness, under which she was patient and tractable. The impression she generally makes upon strangers is that of a lively child. Of her intellectual powers observation is the most developed. The pertinency of her remarks and the accuracy of her descriptions are sometimes beyond her years; she is by no means devoid of imagination, but it is at present chiefly exercised in connection with her mechanical ingenuity, her self-invented occupation being the manufacture of ships and boats, or whatever else may attract her attention. Hitherto she has preferred prose to verse because she is puzzled by the poetical diction; she is particularly fond of reading since she has resumed those pursuits which depend upon sight. Previous to the suspension of them she had made some proficiency in music and began to like it. She had also opportunities of learning a little French; these with writing and reading suited to her age formed her acquirements. She is not very persevering, and with the tendency which her constitution has manifested it is not advisable to stimulate her exertion (all excitement being injurious), though it is desirable to regulate their objects. She is at present very desirous to draw, and shows a singular aptitude for that art, as far as she is permitted to use her pencil. With respect to her temper, it is open and ingenuous—at an earlier age it threatened to be impetuous, but is now sufficiently under control. She is very fond of society and talking, yet not dull when alone. Her person is tall and robust, her features not regular, but countenance animated. The miniature is still life; she would be known by the enclosed profile. She is now in really good health under the present system laid down by Warren and Mayo. It consists of mild medicine and

sparing regimen. There is great justice in Lord Byron's *medical* conjecture, but I am informed that the tendency to local congestion is not always relieved at that period, as the depletion may not be more than adequate to the increased supply of blood, and for some other reasons. I hope I have not omitted to mention any point expressed by Lord Byron.

‘I am yours affectionately,  
‘A. N. B.’

As Trelawny calls the document a transcript, it has been so styled in this chapter: though it seems more probable that Mrs. Leigh forwarded her sister-in-law's actual letter, instead of a copy of it, to her brother. Another reason for thinking the document may have been the original letter is that at this period there was quite enough of general resemblance in the hand-writings of the two sisters-in-law for a document penned by the one to be mistaken for a transcript made by the other. Having no familiarity with the penmanship of the two ladies, and probably being no nice connoisseur and expert in caligraphy, Trelawny was likely enough to make this mistake. He may, of course, have had positive evidence that the document was a transcript; but on the bare statement of an often careless narrator readers are not required to believe that Augusta troubled herself to copy out the long epistle and send the transcript when (there is reason to believe) she was aware of her brother's wish to have an agreeable example of his wife's hand-writing and literary style. Anyhow here is a case of noteworthy and civil (if neither affectionate nor quite friendly) correspondence between the separated husband and wife. The one seeks information from the other respecting their child; the information thus sought is given in a way sufficiently indicative of a desire that the information should be full and effectual. Another thing to be observed is that the profile of Ada, referred to in the letter, and found by Trelawny, ‘with other tokens, that the Pilgrim had most cherished, scattered on the floor,’ came to the poet *from* Lady Byron's hand. She sent him at Pisa a lock of their child's hair; she sent him at Missolonghi a letter (original or transcript) which, albeit addressed to Augusta, was in fact a letter of information for and *to* him, and together with this letter she sent him their child's profile. This gift may perhaps be regarded as Lady Byron's answer to his overture through Lady Blessington's friend; and it is conceivable that had Lepanto fallen into his hands, she would have sent him a congratulatory letter, together with the portrait, for which he had sued so delicately.

The unfinished letter to Augusta ran in these words:—

*‘Missolonghi, February 23, 1824.*

‘MY DEAREST AUGUSTA,—I received a few days ago your and Lady B.’s report of Ada’s health, with other letters from England; for which I ought to be, and am (I hope) sufficiently thankful, as they are of great comfort, and I wanted some, having been recently unwell—but am now much better, so that you must not be alarmed. You will have heard of our journeys and escapes, and so forth, perhaps with some exaggeration; but it is all very well now, and I have been some time in Greece, which is in as good a state as could be expected, considering circumstances. But I will not plague you with politics, wars, or earthquakes, though we have had a rather smart one three nights ago, which produced a scene ridiculous enough, as no damage was done except to those who stuck fast in the scuffle to get first out of the doors or windows; amongst whom some recent importations from England, who had been used to quieter elements, were rather squeezed in the press for precedence.—I have been obtaining the release of about nine-and-twenty Turkish prisoners—men, women, and children, and have sent them, at my own expense, home to their friends; but one pretty little girl of nine years of age, named Hato or Hatagée, has expressed a strong wish to remain with me or under my care; and I have nearly determined to adopt her, if I thought Lady B. would let her come to England as a companion to Ada (they are about the same age), and we could easily provide for her,—if not, I can send her to Italy for education. She is very lively and quick, and with great black Oriental eyes and Asiatic features. All her brothers were killed in the revolution. Her mother wishes to return to her husband, who is at Previsa; but says that she would rather entrust the child to me in the present state of the country. Her extreme youth and sex have hitherto saved her life, but there is no saying what might happen in the course of the war (and of such a war). I shall probably commit her to the care of some English lady in the Islands for the present. The child herself has the same wish, and seems to have a decided character for her age. You can mention this matter, if you think it worth while. I merely wish her to be respectably educated and treated; and if my years and all things be considered, I presume it would be difficult to conceive me to have any other views.—With regard to Ada’s health, I am glad to hear that she is so much better; but I think it right that Lady B. should be informed (and guard against it accordingly) that her description of much of her disposition and tendencies very nearly resembles that of my own at a similar age,—except that I was much more impetuous. Her preference of *prose*



(strange as it may now seem) *was*, and indeed *is* mine (for I hate reading verse—and always did); and I never invented anything but “boats and ships,” and generally something relative to the ocean. I showed the report to Colonel Stanhope, who was struck with the resemblance of parts of it to the paternal line, even now. . . . But it is also fit, though unpleasant, that I should mention that my recent attack, and a very severe one, had a strong appearance of epilepsy; why, I know not—for it is late in life, its first appearance at thirty-six, and, so far as I know, it is *not* hereditary; and it is that it may not *become* so, that you should tell Lady B. to take some precautions in the case of Ada. My attack has not returned, and I am fighting it off with abstinence and exercise, and thus far with success;—if merely casual it is all very well. . . .’

By those who would see Byron’s disposition towards his wife in these last weeks of his existence, and apprehend the way by which he hoped to regain her favour and confidence, this letter should be perused attentively. The letter is also noteworthy for its evidence touching the relations existing between the sisters-in-law, and the influence which Byron believed his sister to have over his wife. It is curious to observe how he hoped to manage Lady Byron through his sister, very much as Lady Byron some eight years since used to influence him through her sister-in-law. He would scarcely have thought of asking Lady Byron (through Augusta) to receive Hatagée and educate her with Ada, had he not felt himself nearing the time when he might ask a kindness and considerable service of her. The suggestion would not have been made had he mistrusted Augusta’s discretion and tact, or questioned the sufficiency of her influence over Lady Byron. It speaks little for Byron’s delicacy, much for the low opinion he knew his sister and wife had of his domestic morality, that he anticipated their suspicion that he regarded Hatagée as his future mistress, whilst proposing that she should be educated with his daughter. On the other hand, the hint that his age and experience should preclude the suspicion was a prudent intimation that time had tempered his passions and disposed him for orderly living, that he had sowed the last of his wild oats and meant to settle down into a sober and decorous middle-age: an intimation that was of course intended to bear fruit in his wife’s regard for and action towards him. In other particulars the letter was skilfully designed to conciliate Lady Byron. The admission that if Ada resembled him in disposition, the child necessarily had tendencies to be guarded against, coupled as it was with a hint of the writer’s opinion that Lady Byron was peculiarly qualified to correct those

tendencies, could not fail to reassure the jealous mother and tend to soften the injured wife. It is also worthy of observation that in this unfinished letter of the 23rd of February, the writer speaks of himself as having had only one epileptic attack. In the letter of the 20th of April, Fletcher does not give the date of the second attack, and the writer of the 'Westminster' article (who doubtless gained his knowledge from the poet's medical attendants, Bruno and Millingen) only speaks of the four subsequent attacks as having taken place in February. It may therefore be assumed that Byron had the four subsequent fits during the last six days of the troublous month.

From the middle of February to the hour of his death on the 19th of April, 1824, Byron's position in a miserable town, lying on the borders of pestiferous marshes, and reeking with the ordure of its miserable streets, was in the highest degree dismal and pitiful. Disheartened by the mutinous spirit of the Suliotes, whose misconduct necessitated the postponement of the operations against Lepanto, he was afflicted by the apprehension that the convulsive seizure of the 15th of February was only the first of a series of similar attacks, that, after weakening his mind, would in the end destroy his reason. It was by playing on this fear that Bruno and Millingen eventually extorted from him a reluctant consent to be bled with the lancet. Whilst tortured with this foreboding of a fate far more repugnant to his imagination than any other kind of death, he endured a succession of petty annoyances and serious mortifications. For weeks together, every day may be said to have brought him a new trouble. A few days after the first fit a Suliote warrior, in sudden resentment at a well-deserved but imprudently delivered blow, shot the Swedish officer, Captain Sass, dead at the entrance of the seraglio, to the cordial approval of his tribal comrades, who refused to surrender the murderer to justice, on the ground that by Suliote law a blow justified any retaliation. In his reasonable alarm at so serious an affair, Colonel Stanhope urged Mavrocordatos and Byron to compel the Suliotes to leave the town; but, probably because Byron and Mavrocordatos had no power to carry out the advice, the Suliotes continued to swagger about the town and fill the surrounding country with alarming rumours. At one time it was rumoured that three hundred of these picturesque cut-throats were marching on the town; at another time some of them were said to have seized Basiladi, a fortress commanding the port of Missolonghi; a third rumour was that the Suliotes were in secret agreement with the growing party of malcontents of the Morea, who were believed to be meditating immediate insurrection and to have an increas-



ing force of sympathisers within the town. Whilst such things were rumoured of the Suliotes, who would, of course, have been aided, if not openly joined, in any mischief by Byron's 'lads,'—even by the fifty picked lads who, occupying a barrack in the rear of the Commander-in-Chief's dwelling, were his peculiar body-guard,—a large party of Cariaschachi's followers, coming in canoes from Anatolico to Missolonghi to avenge some tribal affront, threw the town into a panic, and made prisoners of two of the Primates, who were forthwith carried off to Anatolico. Catching the spirit of the natives, the foreigners who had been imported by the Liberators became a source of embarrassment to their employers. The mechanics, brought from England by Captain Parry on the understanding that he would find them good quarters in a safe place, had barely made acquaintance with Missolonghi when they entertained reasonable mistrust of its safety, and insisted on being returned to England. Blockaded by Turkish vessels, Missolonghi was shaken by earthquake, agitated by alarms of treason, stirred to terror by anticipations of the plague. The plague stayed away; but typhus fever, typhoid fever, and malarial fever, decimated the miserable multitude of the unhappy town. Fletcher used no *bold* figure of speech when he wrote to England that the people were dying by scores in the day of fevers, referable chiefly to the marshes about and the filth within the town. Perhaps the unhealthiest point of this fever-trap was the spot covered by the Commander-in-Chief's comfortless house, that stood on the marge of the shallow creek whose surface was a chief contributor to the unwholesomeness of the town.

When Colonel Stanhope had gone off to Odysseus and the Eastern chiefs, Byron was left in this wretched station without a single Englishman who was either his friend, or in any way qualified to live on a familiar footing with him. Mavrocordatos and the Greeks of the Prince's staff were persons with whom he could act with complaisance and cordiality, but he cannot be said to have had a single friend amongst those recent acquaintances. Though he appears to have regarded him with kindness when they were in Cephalonia, it would have been strange had the poet attached himself strongly to little Bruno, whose highest title to respect was that he was an imperfect master of his vocation. Pietro Gamba was still by the poet's side,—but in spite of all the fine things that have been written of the poet's grateful appreciation of the young Count's devotedness, and notwithstanding the attachment that existed between them at Ravenna, it is difficult to believe that Teresa Guiccioli's brother was in Greece an altogether congenial comrade to the Liberator,



who rated him so roundly and 'nagged' at him so incessantly for squandering the money on scarlet cloth. There is no question that want of congenial society must be placed on the list of the depressing circumstances of Byron's life at Missolonghi. Under the circumstances it is not wonderful that he made much of William Parry—the 'fine rough subject,' as his patron styled him—who, with a natural vein of humour and a strong talent for mimicry, amused the poet with his droll stories and impudent fabrications, and was well 'worth his brandy' in so doleful a place. So many examples have been given of the way in which Byron's spirits rose under conditions the least conducive to cheerfulness, it will occasion readers no surprise to be told that even in this fever-den on the marge of a muddy creek, flanked by pestilential swamps, he bore up bravely, and for a few weeks seemed none the worse—on the contrary, almost seemed something the better for his repeated attacks of epilepsy. All through that miserable March and later he continued to use his pen,—sometimes using it with pathetic lightness and pleasantry. Once and again he indulged his old propensity for practical joking. To scare the buffoon, Parry, who was comically timorous about earthquakes, he instructed his Suliotes (the body-guard of fifty) to roll barrels, containing loose cannon-balls, over the higher floors of his house, and by leaping at the same time on the floors to shake the whole building. Suffering much from the wetness of the season, which precluded him from taking as much horse-exercise in the open air as he desired for pastime and needed for health, he spent much of his time daily—playing with his pistols and fencing-foils in the big guard-room, in which he housed the fifty picked Suliotes, who, when the weather permitted him to mount horse, used to attend him over the neighbouring country on foot, running as fast as the horses galloped. The order maintained in these exercises deserves notice. The Captain of the Suliotes with a division of his men went first; then came the horsemen,—Byron, with Pietro Gamba on his one side, and the Greek interpreter on the other, followed by the two grooms (Tita, and the negro whom Byron begged from Trelawny) in rich liveries; the cavalcade being brought up by a rear-guard of running Suliotes.

All this while Byron persisted more rigorously than ever in the suicidal regimen,—persisting in it, however, not so much from dread of obesity, as from dread of the recurrence of epilepsy, which he imagined he would provoke by even moderate indulgence in flesh and wine. 'I am fighting it off with abstinence and exercise,' he wrote to his sister on the 23rd of February; and persisting in the common mistake of dyspeptic persons, who

are so apt to imagine that because food burdens them they ought to eschew it, as a kind of poison, he persisted in 'fighting off' the epilepsy by abstinence, when he ought to have cosseted his stomach into better behaviour, by giving it moderate quantities of light but substantial nutriment, and at the same time have ceased to irritate it with strong cathartic medicines. Refusing to take meat in any way but that of weak broth, he also refused to eat fish,—one of the few viands to be had in excellent condition at Missolonghi. Henceforth he lived chiefly on tea, toast and vegetables; sometimes taking a little thin soup, and sometimes a little cheese. In fact, he never starved himself more rigorously than in these last weeks of his existence, when every breath of air that came into his body was loaded with marsh-poison. And there never was a time when he took more pills and Epsom salts. 'He almost every morning,' says Moore, 'measured himself round the wrist and waist, and whenever he found these parts, as he thought, enlarged, took a strong dose of medicine.' In former time, curbing his propensity to fatten, chiefly for the preservation of his personal comeliness, he now watched it with jealous anxiety as the indication, whether he was carrying out with sufficient resoluteness the rigorous regimen, by which he hoped to 'fight off' epilepsy.

Whilst things went thus ill with Byron at Missolonghi, affairs were growing brighter for the Greeks, both in their own country, where arrangements were in progress for the Congress of the Chiefs of both the great divisions of Greece at Salona,—and also in London, where the Greek Loan was being successfully negotiated, mainly through the influence of the poet's name. At the same time, stirred by the poet's celebrity and example, friends of the Greek cause—some of them being men of affluence, with the power and disposition to contribute largely to the fund, needful for pushing the conflict to a successful termination—were hastening to Greece from England. Much good was anticipated from the Salona Congress. Much advantage could not fail to come to Greece from the streams of enthusiastic volunteers moving towards the Levant.

Something must be said of the circumstances under which Odysseus, the most powerful and energetic of the Eastern Chiefs, determined to invite the Chiefs of the two divisions of the country to a conference that should aim at the settlement of existing dissensions, and the unanimous arrangement of measures for the ensuing campaign. With all his anxiety and pains to avoid even the appearance of partisanship, Byron had been drawn into the position, though he was in no degree warmed by the passions, of a partisan of the Western Chiefs. At



Cephalonia he foresaw that the mere accident of residence would probably expose him to a suspicion of favouring the one party more than the other; and from the moment when he landed from the *mistico*, circumstances had tended to impose upon him the character he was most desirous of avoiding. Whilst the Western Chiefs regarded him as their peculiar patron, the Governor of Western Greece favoured the notion that, as the possessor of Lord Byron's unreserved confidence, he would be the administrator of his influence. It was natural for Mavrocordatos to take this pleasant view of his relations with Lord Byron, who had every purpose to act cordially with him, but no disposition to be used by him as a tool. It was no less natural for Odysseus to be jealous of his rival's authority over the English peer, and to conceive that by luring Lord Byron to his side the wily Mavrocordatos, with a craft surpassing even the subtlety of Greeks, was drawing into his hands the stranger's influence—in other words, the whole English influence. Of course the Chiefs, who followed Odysseus, took the same view of the position. Byron was the bone for which the two Chiefs and their respective parties were contending. Moore represents that Byron's difficulties during March and the earlier days of April were 'not a little heightened by the part taken by Colonel Stanhope and Mr. Trelawny, who, having allied themselves with Odysseus, the most powerful of these Eastern Chieftains, were endeavouring actively to detach Lord Byron from Mavrocordatos, and enlist him in their own views.' Moore had a strong opinion that the English influence suffered severely from this action by Trelawny and Stanhope, which the biographer even ventured to stigmatize as an 'ill-timed and unfortunate schism.' In truth, however, Trelawny and Stanhope were just then far more desirous of detaching Byron from Missolonghi, lest he should die there, than of detaching him from Mavrocordatos, lest he should become a mere creature of the wily Greek's ambition. To those who can read between the lines of diplomatic correspondence and see beneath the surface of diplomatic intrigues, it is obvious that Trelawny and Colonel Stanhope were loyally playing into Byron's hands, and that Byron had every reason for secret contentment at the doings of his two friends who, instead of wishing to thwart his designs and diminish his authority, were furthering his interest amongst the Eastern Chiefs. Wishing to keep Byron as far as possible to himself and his party, Mavrocordatos disliked the project for the Salona Congress; and Byron was too sufficient a diplomatist to dismiss the Prince's objections with contemptuous haste. Dallying with Odysseus's envoy (Mr. Finlay), he



yielded to Colonel Stanhope's agent (Captain Humphries), and made Mavrocordatos promise to accompany him to the meeting of the Chiefs. 'My dear Stanhope,' he wrote on March 19, 1824, just a month before his death, 'Prince Mavrocordatos and myself will go to Salona to meet Ulysses, and you may be very sure that P. M. will accept my proposition for the advantage of Greece.' Four days later (March 23) he wrote to Mr. Barff, 'In a few days P. Mavrocordatos and myself, with a considerable escort, intend to proceed to Salona at the request of Ulysses and the Chiefs of Eastern Greece, and take measures offensive and defensive for the ensuing campaign.' Three days later (March 26) he had received (from Mr. Barff) intelligence of the successful negotiation of the loan, and (from Prince Mavrocordatos) the information of his appointment to be one of the three Commissioners of the loan, which it was hoped would put an end to the dissensions that were mainly, though not altogether, due to the want of means for paying fleets and armies. Unfortunately the Congress was postponed for sufficient reasons or on fair pretexts till the 16th of April, when Byron was dying. Had Byron left Missolonghi within 'a few days' of the 23rd of March, he might perhaps have escaped the malarial fever that gave the final blow to his failing powers. Had he appeared at Salona on the 16th of April, 1824, he would have stood there between two rival groups of Chieftains, both of them eager to conciliate the Chief Commissioner of the loan, each of them bent on surpassing the other in utterances of gratitude and devotion to their benefactor. Trelawny (as conversant as any living man in the intrigues and counsels of the two contending parties) certainly was not without grounds for his strong opinion that, 'had Byron lived to reach Salona as commissioner of the loan, the dispenser of a million crowns would have been offered a golden one.'

The sure consequence of Byron's suicidal measures for fighting off the epilepsy came no sooner than intelligent and fully informed observers of his case expected it to come. Caught in a heavy rain-shower on the 10th of April, when he was riding with Pietro Gamba, he returned to his house wet to the skin. On the morrow (April 11th) he again mounted horse and rode in the olive-woods, though he was suffering from chilly tremours and rheumatic pains. In the evening of the 11th he was in the grip of the fever that never loosed its hold of him. There is no need to tell how his youthful and incompetent doctors (Bruno and Millingen) did at the same time their best and their worst for him. In justice to these sorry physicians it must be admitted that they treated their patient no worse than he had

treated himself. On the 16th, his dread of insanity was so worked upon that he consented to be bled with the lancet. 'It is true,' these young doctors said to him, 'you care not for life; but who can assure you that, unless you change your resolution, the uncontrolled disease may not operate such disorganization in your system as utterly and for ever to deprive you of reason?' After recording that he spoke these words to his patient, Millingen adds triumphantly, 'I had hit at last the sensible chord, and partly annoyed by our importunities, partly persuaded, he cast at us both the fiercest glance of vexation, and throwing out his arm said, in the angriest tone, "There,—you are, I see, a damned set of butchers,—take away as much blood as you like, and have done with it." ' Twenty ounces of blood were taken forthwith from the man, who for the last five weeks had been living on toast and tea, and reducing himself with violent medicine. On next day (April 17th), when the bleeding had been repeated twice, blisters were put on his legs above the knees; blisters that would have been applied to the soles of his feet, had he not hinted his repugnance to exhibit his feet to the medical attendants. Of course he was weaker and in every respect worse on the 18th, but he managed to totter from his bed to the adjoining room, leaning on his servant's (Tita's) arm;—and when there he even amused himself for a few minutes with a book, before he returned to his bed. In the evening Millingen brought two other doctors (Dr. Freiber and Luca Vaya) to look at him. At first Byron refused to see the strange doctors, but afterwards out of respect for Mavrocordatos's wish permitted them to look at him. 'Very well,' he said, 'let them come; but let them look at me and say nothing.' To one of them who, after feeling his pulse, was about to put him a question, Byron said curtly, 'Recollect your promise, and go away.' There was no woman to attend upon the dying poet. The men about him were too many and hysterical. Fletcher, Tita, Millingen, Parry and Pietro Gamba could not have wept more copiously, had there been a prize of a thousand guineas for the one who wept most. All of them seem to have regarded it as an occasion for exhibiting their sensibility at the cost of their patron's composure. The weeping of these men would alone have shown Byron his case was hopeless, and probably he learnt the fact from their misbehaviour. Anyhow he does not seem to have realized that he was dying till the strange doctors had taken their departure, when he was within two hours of breathing his last intelligible utterance. *Before* he took the first of the powerful anodyne drinks, which gave him a long slumber, there was a painful conversation (to which further



reference will be made) between the sinking sufferer who could not express his desires intelligibly and the valet Fletcher, who tried in vain to apprehend his master's wishes. It was about six o'clock in the evening of the 18th of April, when he said 'Now I shall go to sleep!' the last words that ever passed his lips. After lying another four-and-twenty hours in a state of unconsciousness, he surprised his watchers at 6.15 p.m. of April 19th, 1824, by opening his eyes and then instantly shutting them. He died at that instant.

People are apt to assign excessive value to the utterances of the dying. There are, however, occasions when the speeches of the death-bed reveal strange secrets. The occasions are more frequent when in its last efforts to exercise its failing powers the mind declares with singular and pathetic clearness its deepest and most enduring affections. When individuals are named by dying lips, it is never difficult for the listener to determine whether the persons so mentioned engage the speaker's affectionate concern or are the objects of his antipathy; for whilst it soothes a dying man or animates him with tender emotion to remember those whom he loves, it causes him visible distress to remember those whom he still abhors. Byron's last words to Fletcher are memorable for pointing to a group of persons whom he regarded affectionately in the brief interval between the moment when he knew he was sinking, and the moment when he fell under the influence of the narcotic drinks.

Disputes about Byron's last words to his servants having arisen from ignorance that the authoritative accounts of the pathetic conversation vary in several particulars, it is well to bring together the various published versions of the affair, for which Fletcher—an honest and devoted, though a dissolute and illiterate fellow—was altogether or partly accountable.

(1.) The account of the poet's last illness, drawn by Trelawny (from Fletcher's spoken words) immediately after he had made the post-mortem examination of the poet's feet, gives the talk to the valet thus:—'He was worse after this, and became delirious and violent; began to talk and give directions; took hold of one of Fletcher's and one of Tita's hands. Fletcher said, "Shall I write?" Byron muttered to him for half-an-hour, his lips moving, but indistinct. He said, "Now I have told you everything; four thousand dollars for the——and——; but 'tis too late. I have said all; do you understand me? If you don't obey me I will haunt you if I can!" "I have not understood a word," said Fletcher. "That's a pity," Byron replied, "for 'tis now too late. You will go to Mrs. Leigh——and tell her and say——and everything, and her children," &c.



"And tell Lady Byron"—heavily sighing, but only muttered—"these are dying words!" Fletcher said again he did not understand. "Good God!" he said, and tried to repeat it, but his lips only moved. He understood Fletcher, and seemed to strain hard to make himself understood, and to feel his inability.' Trelawny, he it observed, does not offer his narrative as a full and precise report either of all Fletcher *had* to tell or of all he *did* tell him; but merely as a collection of 'fresh rough notes' of the principal particulars.

(2.) In 'Mr. Fletcher's Account of Lord Byron's Last Moments,' published in the Appendix to Medwin's 'Conversations' (1824), the valet's report of the last words (a report that exhibits in every line the artifice of the commonplace *litterateur* who puts the servant's statements into shape) runs thus:—Although his Lordship did not appear to think his dissolution was so near, I could perceive he was getting weaker every hour, and he even began to have occasional fits of delirium. He afterwards said, "I now begin to think I am seriously ill; and, in case I should be taken off suddenly, I wish to give you several directions, which I hope you will be particular in seeing executed." I answered that I would, in case such an event came to pass; but expressed a hope that he would live many years to execute them much better himself than I could. To this my master replied, "No, it is now nearly over;" and then added, "I must tell you all without losing a moment!" I then said, "Shall I go, my lord, and fetch pen, ink, and paper?" "Oh, my God! no, you will lose too much time, and I have it not to spare, for my time is short," said his Lordship; and immediately after, "Now, pay attention!" His Lordship commenced by saying, "You will be provided for." I begged him, however, to proceed with things of more consequence. He then continued, "Oh, my poor dear child!—my dear Ada! My God! could I but have seen her! Give her my blessing—and my dear sister Augusta and her children;—and you will go to Lady Byron, and say—tell her everything;—you are friends with her." His Lordship appeared to be greatly affected at this moment. Here my master's voice failed him, so that I could only catch a word at intervals; but he kept muttering something very seriously for some time, and would often raise his voice and say, "Fletcher, now if you do not execute every order which I have given you, I will torment you hereafter if possible." Here I told his Lordship, in a state of the greatest perplexity, that I could not understand a word of what he said; to which he replied, "Oh, my God! then all is lost, for it is now too late! Can it be possible you have not understood me?"

"No, my Lord," said I; "but I pray you to try and inform me once more." "How can I?" rejoined my master; "it is now too late, and all is over!" I said, "Not our will, but God's be done!" and he answered, "Yes, not mine be done—but I will try——" His Lordship did indeed make several efforts to speak, but could only repeat two or three words at a time,—such as "My wife! my child! my sister!—you know all—you must say all—you know my wishes:" the rest was quite unintelligible.'

(3.) In Moore's narrative of the death-bed scenes, the conversation between the poet and his valet assumes this shape: 'It was now evident that he knew he was dying; and between his anxiety to make his servant understand his last wishes, and the rapid failure of his powers of utterance, a most painful scene ensued. On Fletcher asking whether he should bring pen and paper to take down his words, "Oh, no," he replied—"there is no time—it is now nearly over. Go to my sister—tell her—go to Lady Byron—you will see her, and say——" Here his voice faltered, and became gradually indistinct; notwithstanding which he continued still to mutter to himself, for nearly twenty minutes, with much earnestness of manner, but in such a tone that only a few words could be distinguished. These, too, were only names,—“Augusta”—“Ada”—“Hobhouse”—“Kinnaird.” He then said, “Now, I have told you all.” “My Lord,” replied Fletcher, “I have not understood a word your Lordship has been saying.” “Not understand me?” exclaimed Lord Byron, with a look of the utmost distress, “what a pity!—then it is too late; all is over!” “I hope not,” answered Fletcher; “but the Lord's will be done!” “Yes, not mine,” said Byron. He then tried to utter a few words, of which none were intelligible, except “My sister—my child.”'

Each of these versions leaves the reader in regret for its sketchiness and want of details that might have been given. All are unsatisfactory. Trelawny's memorandum consists of rough notes (hastily jotted down) of what he deemed the most important particulars of Fletcher's rambling statements. At a time so near the death, Fletcher remembered his master to have said, 'And tell Lady Byron,' and after sighing and muttering to have added, 'These are dying words!' The version of Medwin's Appendix is a vamped-up performance; but it may be deemed a trustworthy statement of Fletcher's recollections in respect to the words actually assigned to Byron. It follows that immediately after his return to England the valet was under the impression that his master thought of Lady Byron with kindness: for the servant cannot have conceived his master



likely to finish an unkind message to his wife with the words, 'Tell her everything,—you are friends with her.' It may be assumed that Moore questioned Fletcher, and aided his memory with suggestions. Time and space being matters of no consideration with Moore, he should have given a record, in question and answer, of his discourse with the servant. The biographer was too much set on making this part of the story read prettily. For the sake of dramatic effect and theatrical pathos he even garnished his death-bed scenes with scraps of Pietro Gamba's romantic sentimentalities,—such as the one which makes the poet ejaculate in his last hour respecting Greece, 'I have given her my time, my means, my health—and now I give her my life! What could I do more?' It is more to the purpose that the Count, writing to the Hon. Mrs. Leigh in 1824, assured her that in his dying moments Byron 'named his dear daughter, his sister, his wife, Hobhouse and Kinnaird.'

The important facts of the miserably inadequate reports of the miserably insufficient words are,—(1) That Lady Byron was present in the poet's mind; (2) That he remembered her without a sign of animosity; (3) That he spoke of her in the same breath with his daughter and sister; (4) That he tried to send her a message by the servant who was 'friends with her.' He made no effort to send a message to Teresa Guiccioli. Her name did not come to his lips. The woman, whom according to Moore he loved devotedly, was forgotten. But his wife was in his thoughts.

Immediately after Byron's death it was proposed to inter his body at Athens, in the Temple of Theseus. Odysseus urged that this should be done, and Colonel Stanhope favoured the same proposal, which seems at first to have been acceptable to most of the poet's friends in Greece. On consideration, however, another course was deemed preferable, and the great mistake was made of sending the embalmed body to England.

The persons accountable for this ill-advised step were, of course, under the impression that in sending the corpse to England they were sending it to Westminster Abbey or St. Paul's Cathedral. Had they anticipated the refusal to admit the poet to the Abbey, they would, of course, have buried him in Greece, where, resting in the country he had glorified by his writing, and in which he had found an honourable death, he would in these days of quick travel have rested within view of his native land. With the best intentions, however, the lamentable mistake was made, and under Colonel Stanhope's charge the corpse (which had received in Greece the funeral honours accorded to princes) came in the 'Florida' to the



Downs on the 29th of June, 1824. After lying in state for two days (Friday and Saturday, the 9th and 10th of July) at Sir Edward Knatchbull's house in Great George Street, Westminster, where it was viewed by a large number of mourners,<sup>1</sup> the Pilgrim's body was taken out of town at mid-day of the following Monday,—the hearse being followed as far as St. Pancras Church by a long train of carriages belonging to people of noble rank or other social eminence. Passing the humble house tenanted by Mrs. Shelley and Mrs. Williams in Kentish Town, the hearse, attended by a diminished *cortège*, made its slow way to the northern road, and then onwards by tedious stages to the county, where the landed possessions of the Byrons had dwindled from thousands of fair acres to the few square feet of earth in which the poet and a few of his ancestors sleep their last sleep. To her brother's memory, Mrs. Leigh placed in the chancel of Hucknall-Torkard Church, the mural tablet inscribed with these words,—

IN THE VAULT BENEATH,  
WHERE MANY OF HIS ANCESTORS AND HIS MOTHER ARE  
BURIED,  
LIE THE REMAINS OF  
GEORGE GORDON NOEL BYRON,  
LORD BYRON, OF ROCHDALE,  
IN THE COUNTY OF LANCASTER,  
THE AUTHOR OF 'CHILDE HAROLD'S PILGRIMAGE.'  
HE WAS BORN IN LONDON ON THE  
22ND OF JANUARY, 1788.  
HE DIED AT MISSOLONGHI, IN WESTERN GREECE, ON THE  
19TH OF APRIL, 1824.  
ENGAGED IN THE GLORIOUS ATTEMPT TO RESTORE THAT  
COUNTRY TO HER ANCIENT FREEDOM AND RENOWN.

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HIS SISTER, THE HONOURABLE  
AUGUSTA MARIA LEIGH,  
PLACED THIS TABLET TO HIS MEMORY.

Since Byron's interment in an insignificant church of a county where he was little known during his life and did

<sup>1</sup> The accounts of the poet's appearance, to those who saw him in his coffin, are curiously variant. Whilst some of his old friends were of opinion that, with the exception of the look of care and distress which pervaded his features, death had wrought no great change in his countenance; others, who had known him no less intimately, were painfully struck by the alteration. Mrs. Leigh could scarcely recognise the features of her brother, so greatly had they been disfigured to her by the means used for their preservation. And Hobhouse found his old friend's face so completely altered, that he was less affected by it, than by the sight of hand-writing or aught else he could recognise as having belonged to him.

not possess an acre of land at the time of his death, the exclusion of his body from Westminster Abbey has been the occasion for many severe reflections on the illiberality of ecclesiastical persons, and on their want of Christian charity for those from whom they differ on matters of religious opinion. But the asperity of these reflections is more manifest than their justice. The denial of a grave to the greatest poet of the nineteenth century,—in the judgment of many persons, the greatest of all our national poets after Shakespeare,—is doubtless a reason (though scarcely a strong one) for raising an edifice for the enduring commemoration of celebrated persons, without respect to their religious views or domestic virtues. It may even be a reason (though surely a weak one) for depriving the Deans of Westminster of their power of denying sepulture within the walls of the Abbey to persons whom they deem undeserving of so great a distinction. But so long as they are required to decide, to whom the honour should be awarded or denied, it will be alike unreasonable and unjust to charge them with odious passions because their decisions are made with conscientious reference to matters which they are trained to think, and by their official obligations are bound to think, matters of paramount importance. On being moved to open the doors of the Abbey to a poet, whose literary fame was only one side of his reputation, and whose writings had not been uniformly favourable to religion and morality, it is not surprising that, taking the strictly ecclesiastical view of the question, the Dean of Westminster declined to act as though interment in the historic church were nothing more than a conventional way of recognising genius. Having for years thought the poet's life scandalous and his influence a force making for evil, it is not obvious that the Dean should have changed his opinions in deference to a change of social sentiment. Perhaps there was as much intolerance in the Byronic enthusiasts who accused the Dean of bigotry, as in the Dean who had vexed them by acting in accordance with his sense of duty.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

## THE DESTRUCTION OF 'THE MEMOIRS.'

Who was the Destroyer?—John Cam Hobhouse—Byron's Gift of the 'Memoirs' to Moore—The Joint Assignment by Byron and Moore to Murray—The Power of Redemption—News in London of the Poet's Death—Hobhouse's Prompt Measures—The Destruction—The Scene in Albermarle Street—The late Mr. Murray's Letter to Wilmot Horton—The present Mr. Murray's Letter to the 'Academy'—Misconceptions respecting Lady Byron—Tom Moore's Friends in the City—Spirit and Substance of the 'Memoirs.'

THE many persons who hope that a copy of Byron's autobiographic 'Memoirs' will be found amongst the Hobhouse MSS., lying under seal at the British Museum, may dismiss the hope. Lord Broughton's papers will be found to comprise letters having reference to the 'Memoirs' and their destruction. They will probably be found to contain correspondence that passed between Byron and Hobhouse respecting the 'Memoirs.'<sup>1</sup> They will probably give the world a statement by Hobhouse of the reasons for destroying the 'Memoirs' and of his part in their destruction. But it is not likely that the man, who used to speak of the 'Memoirs' as foolish documents, and was of opinion that their publication would be hurtful to the poet's reputation, made a copy of the autobiography and took measures for its publication in the twentieth century to the injury of his friend's fame. Moreover, John Cam Hobhouse was more accountable than any other person concerned in the business for the destruction of the famous papers. Had it not been for him, it is more than probable that Byron's story of his own life would still be in existence, in his own handwriting. It is not too much to say that John Cam Hobhouse was himself the destroyer of the 'Memoirs.' It is therefore in the highest

<sup>1</sup> I reproduce these words precisely as they were written when I, in common with *all* other people (with the exception of a few members of the late Lord Broughton's domestic circle), was under the impression that the late Lord Broughton's Byronic evidences were amongst the Hobhouse MSS. lying under seal at the British Museum, and there awaiting publication in the first year of the twentieth century. It having now been declared authoritatively by a member of the late Lord Broughton's familiar circle, who was in his lordship's especial confidence on the matter, that the Hobhouse MSS. at the British Museum contain no matters to enlarge our knowledge of Lord Byron, the public may wait without impatience for the publication of a set of writings, that contain nothing of importance about the poet.



degree improbable that he took care to transmit to posterity a copy of the writings which he was at so much pains to destroy.

It is, of course, in the reader's memory that Byron gave the manuscript of the greater part of the 'Memoirs' to Moore at Venice, in October 1819. Moore's account of the circumstances, under which the gift was made, runs thus :—'A short time before the dinner he left the room, and in a minute or two returned, carrying in his hand a white leather bag. "Look here," he said, holding it up—"this would be worth something to Murray, though *you*, I dare say, would not give sixpence for it." "What is it?" I asked. "My Life and Adventures," he answered. On hearing this, I raised my hands in a gesture of wonder. "It is not a thing," he continued, "that can be published during my lifetime, but you may have it—if you like—there, do whatever you please with it." In taking the bag, and thanking him most warmly, I added, "This will make a nice legacy for my little Tom, who shall astonish the latter days of the nineteenth with it." He then added, "You may show it to any of your friends you think worthy of it;"—and this is nearly, word for word, the whole of what passed between us on the subject.' Several references to the 'Memoirs' occur in the subsequent (published) correspondence between Moore and Byron; from some of which it appears that the autobiographer made additions to the narrative whilst he was at Ravenna. 'Have you,' he wrote to Moore on October 17, 1820, 'got my "Memoirs" copied? I have begun a continuation. Shall I send it you, so far as it is gone?'—'I told you in my last,' he wrote on November 5, 1820, 'that I have been going on with the "Memoirs," and have got as far as twelve more sheets. But I suspect they will be interrupted. In that case I will send them by post, though I feel remorse at making a friend pay so much for postage, for we can't frank here beyond the frontier.' On the 9th of December, 1820, Byron wrote to his friend, 'Besides this letter, you will receive *three* packets, containing, in all, 18 more sheets of memoranda, which, I fear, will cost you more in postage than they will ever produce by being printed in the next century. Instead of waiting so long, if you could make anything of them *now* in the way of *reversion* (that is, after *my* death) I should be very glad,—as, with all due regard to your progeny, I prefer you to your grandchildren. Would not Longman or Murray advance you a certain sum *now*, pledging themselves *not* to have them published till after *my* decease, think you?—and what say you? Over these latter sheets I should leave you a discretionary power; because they contain, perhaps, a thing or two which is too sincere for the

public. If I consent to your disposing of their reversion *now*, where would be the harm? Tastes may change. I would, in your case, make my essay to dispose of them, *not* publish, now; and if you (as is most likely) survive me, add what you please from your own knowledge; and, *above all*, *contradict* anything, if I have *mis*-stated; for my first object is the truth, even at my own expense.' In a note to the discretionary power here granted, Moore remarks in the 'Life,' 'The power here meant is that of omitting passages that might be objectionable. He afterwards gave me this, as well as every other right, over the whole of the manuscript.' In April 1821, Byron was still adding to the 'Memoirs.' On the 28th of that month he wrote from Ravenna to Moore, 'I have written a sheet or two more of the memoranda for you; and I kept a little journal for about a month or two, till I had filled the paper-book.' On June 4, 1821, he inquired of his future biographer, 'Did you receive my letters with the two or three concluding sheets of Memoranda?' It is, therefore, obvious that the 'Memoirs' grew considerably after the gift to Moore.

As the 'Memoirs' dealt at some length with the particulars of his 'domestic troubles' (to use the phrase of Byronic biographers), Byron directed that they should be submitted to Lady Byron before publication. On the anniversary of his wedding-day, he wrote to Moore from Ravenna, 'January 2, 1820, My dear Moore,—

'To-day it is my wedding-day;  
And all the folks would stare,  
If wife should dine at Edmonton,  
And I should dine at Ware.

'Or thus,—

'Here's a happy new year? but with reason,  
I beg you'll permit me to say—  
Wish me *many* returns of the *season*,  
But as *few* as you please of the *day*.

'My this present writing is to direct you that, *if she chooses*, she may see the MS. Memoir in your possession. I wish her to have fair-play, in all cases, even though it will not be published till after my decease. For this purpose, it were but just that Lady B. should know what is there said of her and hers, that she may have full power to remark on or respond to any part or parts, as may seem fitting to herself. This is fair dealing, I presume, in all events.' On the previous day (January 1, 1820), Byron had written to Lady Byron, offering her the perusal of the 'Memoir,'—an offer which she declined in the letter of March 10, 1820, printed on a previous page of this work.



The manuscript having been offered to the Longmans, who declined to purchase it, Moore carried the 'Memoirs' to Murray, who bought them in November 1821, of the song-writer for the large sum of two thousand guineas, it being stipulated in the joint-assignment, by the two poets who conveyed their property in the papers to the publisher, that Moore should at the proper time *after* Byron's death edit the documents and continue the narrative up to the date of the autobiographer's death. As Byron was not expected to die within two and a half years of the execution of the deed (though none of his familiar acquaintance could have anticipated longevity for a man of his suicidal habits), the sum paid for MSS., not to be published during their author's life, was liberal and courageous. It was probably none the less so, because of the publisher's wish to recover his former influence over his famous poet, with whom he had recently been at discord. Byron was gratified and surprised by the largeness of the payment to Moore. 'Your conduct to Moore,' he wrote to Murray, on August 10, 1821, from Ravenna, soon after Murray made the proposal, and some three months before the execution of the deed of assignment, 'is certainly very handsome; and I would not say so if I could help it, for you are not at present by any means in my good graces.' It should be observed that Byron, Moore and Murray all speak of the sum as one of guineas instead of pounds,—the extra shillings being probably thrown in by the publisher, for the purpose of pleasing the poet who was apt to be quarrelsome about 'sizings.' 'I am glad,' Byron wrote to Moore, from Ravenna, August 24, 1821, 'you are satisfied with Murray, who seems to value dead lords more than live ones. I have just sent him the following answer to a proposition of his:—

“For Orford and for Waldegrave, &c.”

'The argument of the above is, that he wants to "stint me of my sizings," as Lear says,—that is to say, *not* to propose an extravagant price for an extravagant poem, as is becoming. Pray take his guineas, by all means—I taught him that. He made me a filthy offer of *pounds* once; but I told him that, like physicians, poets must be dealt with in guineas, as being the only advantage poets have in association with *them*, as votaries of Apollo.' In his satisfaction with Murray's treatment of Moore, and to reward the publisher for his liberality to the poet in difficulties, Byron, on September 28, 1821, wrote a letter of instructions to Murray, respecting the persons to whom he should apply for letters wherewith to make the biography as good a book as possible. 'I also wish to give you a hint



or two,' he said in the noteworthy epistle, '(as you have really behaved very handsomely to Moore in the business, and are a fine fellow in your line) for your advantage. *If* by your own management you can extract any of my epistles from Lady Caroline Lamb, they might be of use in your collection (sinking of course the *names* and *all such circumstances* as might hurt living feelings or *those of survivors*); they treat of more topics than love occasionally.'

Thus matters stood with respect to the 'Memoirs' for several months. Murray had bought them of Byron and Moore for two thousand guineas,—and had acquired his property in them by an instrument that accorded neither of the poets any power of redemption. Soon, however, Byron's heart began to fail him and his mind to waver in respect to his purpose with what Hobhouse regarded as foolish documents,—papers whose publication would certainly pain his wife, and would certainly not raise their author's character for chivalry. It has been shown to the reader how Byron softened to his wife at Pisa, and how after Lady Noel's death he entertained a hope that he and Lady Noel's daughter might come to a friendly understanding,—that would involve the exchange of civilities, and might even result eventually in the reunion, which he still declared to be impossible. Whilst relenting towards his wife and hoping that she would relent to him, it was natural for him to be doubtful whether he had done well to write the 'Memoirs,' and to be dissatisfied with and compunctious about the steps he had taken to censure their posthumous publication. He determined at least to recover the right to redeem the autobiography, so as to be in a position to destroy it before he went to another world. Moore was communicated with on the subject, and then Murray was requested by both the poets to give them and either of them the power of redeeming the property during the autobiographer's life; the result being the execution of a deed on May 6, 1822, which gave the poets the wished-for power over the MSS. which they had sold irrecoverably by the agreement of the preceding November. 'Whereas,' runs the most interesting clause of this deed of May 6, 'Lord Byron and Mr. Moore *are now inclined to wish the said work not to be published*, it is agreed that, if either of them shall, during the life of the said Lord Byron, repay the two thousand guineas to Mr. Murray, the latter shall re-deliver the "Memoirs;" but that, if the sum be not repaid during the lifetime of Lord Byron, Mr. Murray shall be at full liberty to print and publish the said "Memoirs" within three months after the death of the said Lord Byron.' Thus, so early as the 6th of May, 1822—

more than a year and ten months before his death—Byron was disinclined that the ‘Memoirs’ should be published, communicated the disinclination to his publisher, and put the disinclination on record in the legal instrument whose only object was the recovery to himself of the power to suppress the discreditable composition.

The execution of this second deed (of May 6, 1822) was followed by correspondence, touching the ‘Memoirs,’ between Byron and Moore, Hobhouse and Byron, Murray and Moore, before the intelligence of Byron’s death reached England. One of the strange facts in the strange history of the whole business is, that Murray was kept for two years and four months out of possession of the original assignment of the autobiography, executed in November 1821; a deed that should, of course, have come to his hands on the payment of the two thousand guineas to Moore. On being pressed repeatedly by Murray for the deed, Moore replied that it was in the custody of Byron’s banker,—Kinnaid; and it seems that it was kept from its rightful owner by the poet’s banker, friend, and agent-in-chief in England. This deed being the publisher’s sole lien on the property for which he had paid so large a sum of money, he naturally wished to have it in his own hands. But the poet was within a month or six weeks of his death, before the publisher succeeded in getting the instrument into his own hands. In March 1823 he wrote urgently to Moore for the withheld deed, and in the letter begged that the second deed (according to the power of redemption) should be acted upon or cancelled without delay. Twelve months later Mr. Murray was still without his deed; but now he demanded it so peremptorily, that he got possession of it, just in time for it to have been mislaid and, for the moment, lost by one of his own clerks, when it was needed by the destroyers of the ‘Memoirs’ to ascertain in whom the property of the MSS. really lay. On getting hold of the deed, so strangely withheld from him, Mr. Murray again urged Moore either to exercise the power of redemption or cancel the second deed. After some delay Moore declared that he would redeem the MSS., with the assistance of persons in the city who would advance him the money for the purpose, on his insuring his life. On his return to town a few days hence, he would call on Murray, insure his life, borrow the two thousand guineas, and settle the affair. But on his return to town, the Irish songster didn’t go into the city, didn’t insure his life, forgot to call on the publisher. The fact was that Moore was shilly-shallying and procrastinating in this fashion, in order to waste time till he should get final instructions from Byron who,



though he had made up his mind to redeem the manuscripts, wished to defer the repayment of the two thousand guineas, till he should be in less urgent need of all procurable money for his expenses in Greece. At first inattentive to the demands for the original deed, because he anticipated the time when Byron would wish to recover some of his power over the 'Memoirs,' and was shrewd enough to think Mr. Murray would be more manageable in respect to the concession of a power of redemption, if he had not the original deed in his hands, Kinnaird was afterwards inattentive to the demands, because he thought it useless to trouble himself to look up the deed that for his own and client's interests might as well remain where it was. It being in no way to his advantage that the 'Memoirs' should be destroyed, Moore waited for Byron to redeem them. With a settled purpose of redeeming the manuscripts and destroying them at a convenient time, Byron deferred the redemption, till the money from the Greek loan should liberate him from the obligation to husband his resources and credit for the necessities of Greece. Kinnaird having at last surrendered the deed, Murray waited for Moore to redeem the manuscripts, Moore waited for Byron to do what he liked in his own affairs, and Byron waited for the financiers of the Greek loan to enable him to use two thousand guineas of his own money on a business—that could wait his convenience. So nothing was done for the redemption of the papers, when England was startled by the news that Byron was dead. By that event Moore lost all legal control over the 'Memoirs,' as the second deed only empowered him to redeem them during Lord Byron's life.

The news of the poet's death reached Mrs. Leigh on Friday the 14th of May, 1824.<sup>1</sup> Three days later (on the afternoon of Monday the 17th of May) his MS. autobiography was given to the flames. Knowing it was Byron's intention to redeem and destroy the 'Memoirs,' and having a strong opinion that the publication of the foolish documents would injure their author's fame, Hobhouse—acting the part of a loyal friend—compassed the destruction of the writings. No concern for Lady Byron's

<sup>1</sup> The authorities differ by a few hours as to the time of the arrival in England of the intelligence of Byron's death. It has been stated authoritatively that the news reached London on 12th May, 1824, and was communicated by Hobhouse to Moore on 13th May. Mrs. Leigh received the news on 14th May. Her precise words in her own hand-writing are: 'On the 14th of May, 1824, I received the intelligence that my brother had breathed his last,' &c. As the news came to Mrs. Leigh in the letter Fletcher sent her from Missolonghi through Mr. Murray, it is not probable that Mr. Murray would have delayed for *two* days to send the doleful letter on from Albemarle Street to the Hon. Mrs. Leigh at St. James's Palace.



feelings was accountable for his alacrity; for there had never been love or liking between himself and her. In stirring for the destruction of the autobiography whose publication would pain her acutely, he thought only of his friend's purpose and honour. To execute one and protect the other, Hobhouse determined to lose neither a day nor an hour. Mrs. Leigh (fortunately in town) was still in her first tears at the dismal tidings, when she received a visit from Hobhouse who, in the course of their doleful talk spoke to her of the 'Memoirs,' told her they were Tom Moore's property, told her they were foolish documents, and assured her that at any cost they must be destroyed. On leaving Mrs. Leigh, Hobhouse went straight to Tom Moore to confer with him about the 'Autobiography.' At this time, be it observed, Hobhouse was unaware that the clause of redemption limited the right of redemption to the term of Lord Byron's life. Knowing the power had been accorded to Byron and Moore jointly and severally, he had no doubt that Moore was still competent to do what he could have done in Byron's lifetime. Moore was also under the same erroneous impression. Hence in their conference on Friday the 14th of May, both Moore and Hobhouse spoke under the same mistake. Having no doubt that on paying Murray the two thousand guineas, he would receive the MSS. as an affair of right, Moore spoke of himself as master of the position. In reply to Hobhouse's earnest request for the destruction of the writings, Moore said that he would not be their destroyer, but would give them to Mrs. Leigh to do her pleasure with them.

At this time Augusta knew little more than nothing of the contents of the 'Memoirs.' Byron had never mentioned the 'Autobiography' to her. She had never seen a slip of the manuscript; no line of the papers had been read to her or repeated to her by any one. She knew her brother had written the narrative, and that the written matter had been the subject of some arrangement between Moore and Murray; she had also heard rumours respecting her brother's way of dealing with some of the subjects that were said to be noticed in the memoranda; but beyond this Byron's sister knew nothing of the personal history.

On Saturday the 15th of May, Augusta received from Hobhouse a large addition to her information respecting the 'Memoirs.' Still under the misapprehension respecting the property in the documents, Hobhouse told her that Moore refused to destroy the papers, but was ready to give them to her to do her will with them. Moore would not give them to any one else, nor would he take upon himself the responsibility of destroying them. Under these circumstances Hobhouse informed Mrs. Leigh that

she must find courage to accept the writings from Mr. Moore and burn the foolish documents as soon as possible. The announcement may well have troubled the poet's sister, and made her implore that so burdensome and terrible a task might not be put upon her. To nerve her to do what he would not have hesitated to do himself, could he have gained sole and lawful possession of the foolish documents, Hobhouse assured Mrs. Leigh that her brother had repented the composition of the 'Memoirs,' had determined they should never see the light, had made up his mind to regain possession of them for the express purpose of destroying them. In burning the 'Memoirs,' she would only be doing for her brother what he had meant to do, and could no longer do for himself. This solemn assurance nerved Augusta to undertake the task assigned to her. On reflection she found courage to say she would take the manuscripts from Moore and be their destroyer. Already the question had been raised respecting the persons who ought to compensate Moore for redeeming the 'Memoirs' at his own cost. Augusta was of opinion that Lady Byron ought not to be asked to contribute anything towards the 2000*l.*, or guineas; that, the destruction of the autobiography being required for her brother's honour, it would be an indelicacy and a meanness for his kindred either to ask or accept money from Lady Byron for the purpose, as though the destruction were about to be made out of regard for her feelings. On this point of honour Mrs. Leigh was emphatic. Lady Byron had, however, been already communicated with on the subject.

One of the persons to oppose Hobhouse's purpose of destroying the 'Memoirs' was Mr. Wilmot Horton, who after conferring with Moore and Murray on the subject agreed to join with them in strenuous opposition to the poet's executor. Calling on Mrs. Leigh on the 16th of May (Sunday) he informed her that Moore had lost the right of redeeming the 'Memoirs,' which on Byron's death became the absolute property of the publisher; that Murray was no less willing than Moore to resign the 'Memoirs' to her; but that like the man of letters the publisher felt strongly that the documents should not be destroyed. Mr. Wilmot Horton was urgent that instead of being put on the fire the 'Memoirs' should be sealed and sent to the bank, so that at some future time it should be possible for a discreet editor to give to the public the unobjectionable passages of the writings. For a moment, but only for a moment, Mrs. Leigh wavered in her purpose to destroy the MSS. in accordance with Hobhouse's entreaty and her promise to him. On learning that Murray was the owner of the papers, she was for a brief while disposed



to escape from the promise, which she had made on the understanding that the foolish documents belonged to Moore and would come to her hands, as a gift from him. But when Mr. Wilmot Horton told her she could not withdraw from the affair, and pressed her to join with him in insisting that the manuscripts should be preserved with a view to eventual publication, she declared stoutly that Mr. Hobhouse's opinion—the opinion of her brother's closest and staunchest friend—was conclusive with her. In vain Mr. Wilmot Horton tried to win her to another opinion. She declared that she would have nothing to do in the matter, except for the destruction of the papers in accordance with Mr. Hobhouse's desire. Finding himself unable to shake her, Mr. Wilmot Horton said he would consent, albeit most reluctantly, to the destruction of the writings.

Hence on Sunday the 16th of May, Murray was protesting against the destruction, Moore was protesting against the destruction, and Wilmot Horton (till Mrs. Leigh induced him to consent to it) was protesting against the destruction. On the other hand, Hobhouse and Mrs. Leigh was resolute for the destruction; Mrs. Leigh's attitude being, as she repeatedly averred, due to Hobhouse's influence.

On the afternoon of the ensuing day (Monday, May 17, 1824), the 'Memoirs'—consisting of several sets of writings (*i. e.* the written matter given to Moore at Venice in 1819, and the several lots of additional matter sent to him from Italy)—and the only existing copy of the entire body of the Memoranda, made either by Moore or under his authority, were destroyed in the drawing-room of Mr. Murray's house in Albemarle Street, in the presence of the publisher himself, the publisher's son (the present chief of the great publishing house), Moore, Hobhouse, Colonel Doyle, Mr. Wilmot Horton, and Mr. Luttrell,—in all, seven persons. It is not surprising that no report has come to the public of the proceedings at a meeting that was remarkable for disorder and excitement. Possibly, an account of the meeting will be found in the Hobhouse MSS. in Lady Dorchester's keeping, but it is questionable whether Hobhouse himself kept his head sufficiently cool and clear to be able on leaving the assembly to put on record all the incidents of the conference that ended with the burning of the papers. Warm words passed between Moore and Murray respecting the property in the 'Memoirs,' each of the disputants maintaining he was the owner of the writings;—Mr. Murray being altogether right and Moore altogether wrong in the controversy, which could not be settled at the moment by reference to the deed of assignment, as one of Mr. Murray's staff had misplaced and for the while lost the instrument which the publisher had



been at so much pains to get possession of. The conclave was curiously prolific of disputes on irrelevant questions. At times the six persons were speaking at once on the same question; at other times, whilst three of the party were in warm debate on one point, the other three (the present Mr. Murray seems to have been only a spectator of the burning) were talking loudly on another point. One of the transactions at the assembly was the repayment (by Moore to Mr. Murray) of the money which the publisher had paid for the copyright of the documents. How Moore got the money is a mystery; that Murray took the money is certain. Probably Mr. Murray could not have said at the moment whether he took the money as a redemption-payment for the MSS. which Moore had lost the right of redeeming, or as payment for the resale of the MSS. to the person of whom he had bought them, or as a compensation (a most inadequate one, under the circumstances) for his own sacrifice of a valuable property. One thing is certain; the publisher behaved excellently well in the business that exposed him to no little misrepresentation and undeserved censure. Hobhouse declared afterwards that he would never be silent when Murray was run down in his hearing for the destruction of the 'Memoirs,' for he knew how honourably the publisher had borne himself in the matter. The actual destroyer of the 'Memoirs' would scarcely say less of the publisher, whom he had overborne into consenting to the destruction.

In the first number of the 'Academy,' the present Mr. Murray published some years since, under his own signature, an interesting statement of particulars touching the history of the famous manuscripts, of whose destruction by fire he was himself an eye-witness in the drawing-room of his father's house in Albemarle Street. Throughout this letter (to be found in the Appendix to Elze's 'Life of Lord Byron') the present Mr. Murray speaks of the sum paid by his father to Moore, and repaid by Moore in 1824, as 2000*l.*, *not* guineas. Moore certainly gave Byron to understand the payment made by Murray was 2000 guineas. Byron, as the reader knows, wrote of the publisher's guineas, and took credit to himself for teaching the man of business to pay in *guineas*. Moreover, in a letter to Mr. Wilmot Horton, May 19, 1824, written only two days after the burning of the 'Memoirs,' when all the facts were fresh in the writer's mind (a letter also to be found in Dr. Elze's 'Appendix'), the late Mr. John Murray is no less precise in speaking of 2000 guineas as the price paid and the sum repaid. 'A joint assignment of the "Memoirs,"' the late Mr. Murray says in this letter, 'was made to me . . . in consideration of the sum of 2000 guineas.'

Quoting the *ipsissima verba* of the redemption clause of the second deed, the late Mr. Murray, obviously copying from the deed (*literal* accuracy being his object), wrote into this remarkable letter, 'If either of them shall, during the life of Lord Byron, repay the 2000 guineas to Mr. Murray.' Towards the close of the same letter, in a very noteworthy sentence of the epistle, the writer speaks of 'the repayment of the 2000 guineas advanced by me.' Which of the two was right on this not unimportant point,—John Murray the father or John Murray the son? As he has not seen the two deeds, the writer of this work hesitates to say positively which of the two gentlemen was in error. But it is obvious one of the two was wrong. If the present Mr. Murray did not make a slip, the late Mr. Murray made one. There are reasons which dispose the present writer to acquit the late Mr. Murray of inaccuracy in the matter.

In his letter to the Editor of 'The Academy,' the present Mr. Murray, speaking of the destruction of the MS. (there were several MSS.), says, 'The proposal to destroy it originated, I believe, with my father the late Mr. John Murray; and his reason for making it (as he has stated in a letter to Mr. R. W. Horton, printed in No. 185 of the "Quarterley Review") was his "regard for Lord Byron's memory, and respect for his surviving family" . . . since it was surmised that the publication might be injurious to the former and painful to the latter. The friends of Lord and Lady Byron "united in wishing for its destruction."' On this important point, the present Mr. Murray was careful to speak only of his *belief*, not of his *knowledge*. It is certain that the present Mr. Murray was mistaken in this belief. On Sunday the 16th of May, 1824, the late Mr. Murray was protesting against the destruction. Hobhouse had made up his mind the 'Memoirs' should be destroyed immediately, before he had spoken a word to Mr. Murray on the subject:—at least two full days before the late Mr. Murray ceased to protest against the destruction. Moreover, the very letter by the late Mr. Murray to Mr. Wilmot Horton, which was quoted from by the present Mr. Murray in justification of his belief, contains conclusive evidence against that belief. The late Mr. Murray's words to Mr. Wilmot Horton in the letter of May 19, 1824, are—'*it was enough for me that the friends of Lord and Lady Byron united in wishing for their destruction;*'—words of avowal by the late Mr. Murray himself that, instead of being the originator of the destruction, he merely consented to the desire of the friends of Lord and Lady Byron, (Hobhouse being the most urgent and influential of those friends.) To the same effect in the same letter, the late Mr. Murray called Mr. Wilmot



Horton to witness, that regard for Lord Byron's honour and for the feelings of Lord Byron's family made him (the writer) '*more anxious that the "Memoirs" should be immediately destroyed*, since it was surmised that the publication might be injurious to the former and painful to the latter;' the force of the '*more anxious*' being shown by the context to be that the writer only (and let it be observed, *most justly*) claimed credit for being less eager for pecuniary advantage, than anxious for the poet's honour and the feelings of the poet's surviving relatives. The whole letter shows that, even in the writer's opinion, his consent to the destruction was *subsequent* to his knowledge of the wish of the poet's friends for the destruction.

In the letter to the Editor of 'The Academy,' the present Mr. Murray says, 'The following persons were previously consulted, as a matter of courtesy, and were present at the burning,—Mr. Hobhouse, as executor and friend of Lord Byron; Colonel Doyle, as a friend of Lady Byron (who actually offered 2000*l.* for the MSS., which she did not pay); Mr. Wilmot Horton, as friend of the Hon. Mrs. Leigh; my father and Mr. Moore, who alone for some time opposed the destruction.' Had the present Mr. Murray known that Hobhouse was the first person to say the '*Memoirs*' must be destroyed, and to tell Mr. Murray so in strenuous terms, he would scarcely have spoken of the future Lord Broughton as being consulted only from a motive of courtesy.—Though Mr. Wilmot Horton used to act for Mrs. Leigh in matters of business, and may therefore be fairly described as representing her in the Albemarle Street drawing-room, it is certain that he was present at the burning of the documents quite as much in the interest of Lady Byron as in the interest of Mrs. Leigh.—Loose things were said and written about the destruction of the papers in 1824 and several subsequent years, and it is probable that the present Mr. Murray was placing undue reliance on written words, when he put into the letter to the editor of 'The Academy' the statement that Lady Byron '*had actually offered 2000*l.* for the MSS., which she did not pay.*' Whatever her failings, Lady Byron was not the woman to forego a payment she had promised to make. It is inconceivable that she ever made the offer. If she made it, she was a far more mysterious and perplexing woman than even her bitterest enemies have thought her.

It was, of course, her wish that the '*Memoirs*' should be destroyed. Wishing it for her own sake, because she knew they would exhibit her in a most unamiable light to the world, she wished it even more strongly for the sake of her daughter. She had spoken in all sincerity when she told Byron that for



Ada's sake she should regret the publication of such a work. It was probably her determination to publish her case against her husband should his autobiographic statement be published after his death. But she was studiously careful, whilst the fate of the 'Memoirs' was under deliberation, to say nothing that could expose her to a charge of causing the destruction of the narrative. The position she assumed was that, as from unfortunate circumstances she was not the guardian of her husband's honour in any matter, least of all in a matter affecting her feelings in so peculiar a manner, it devolved on the members of the Byron family to decide what should be done with the 'Memoirs.' She may, indeed, have expressed a hope that she and her family should not be under the painful necessity of proclaiming the falseness of the record and the writer. If she said anything to this effect, her words of course implied that if she were struck she would defend herself. But beyond this, she certainly never said anything to influence the decision of any one of the persons who committed the papers to the flames; and the writer of this page has reason to believe that she never said so much to any one of them while the fate of the MSS. was under deliberation. It is certain that Lady Byron is not fairly chargeable with either instigating or encouraging others to destroy the 'Memoirs,' whose publication would have been in the highest degree offensive to her. It was a matter of honour with the proud woman to act so as to guard herself from an imputation of compassing the destruction of the papers,—to guard herself against a suspicion of fearing the indignity with which she was menaced. Hobhouse determined to destroy the papers without consulting her on the matter; and it would be absurd to suggest that he was moved to the determination by tenderness for the feelings of the woman, whom he cordially disliked. Is it likely that, knowing Hobhouse's resolve to destroy the papers almost as soon as the resolve was communicated to Augusta, Lady Byron—the discreet, judicious, unimpulsive Lady Byron—made an offer of 2000*l.* for the MSS., which she was well aware would be destroyed by Hobhouse and Augusta?

The destruction of the papers being, however, so obviously to Lady Byron's interest, it is not wonderful that it was imagined by people of her circle, and even by persons concerned in the act of destruction, that the 'Memoirs' were made away with, chiefly out of respect for her sensibilities. Mr. Murray probably took this view of the matter. Mr. Wilmot Horton certainly took it; and consequently he had a strong opinion, when it became a question how Moore should be repaid the satisfaction

money he paid Murray on the day of conflagration, that Lady Byron ought to provide the requisite 2000*l.* or guineas. All she offered to give towards the arrangement was a moiety of the sum of repurchase. Her case being that the documents having been burnt for the sake of Byron's fame, and not out of regard for her feelings, she maintained that the Byron family should find the money needful for the settlement with Moore. Augusta was of the same opinion, and insisted that her sister-in-law ought not to be asked to contribute anything to the payment. On finding, however, that no one of the Byron family, with the exception of Augusta, would give money for the purpose, Lady Byron consented to a proposal that she and Augusta should each provide a thousand pounds (or guineas) for the purpose. The papers having been burnt on Monday afternoon, Mr. Wilmot Horton sent an express over to Lady Byron to assure her of their destruction; the messenger despatched before six o'clock p.m. with the welcome tidings, also conveying an assurance to Lady Byron that the sender of the intelligence would breakfast with her on the following Wednesday. At the breakfast the chief matter of conversation between Lady Byron and her visitor was the necessity for repaying Moore. Ere long it was arranged that Lady Byron and Mrs. Leigh should each deposit a thousand pounds (or guineas) in the hands of Dr. Lushington and Mr. Wilmot Horton for Moore's repayment. For some reason, this arrangement fell through,—possibly because Dr. Lushington saw that by acting in the matter he would reveal to Moore that the money came to him partly from Lady Byron. After a lapse of many months, it was proposed that Hobhouse and Mr. Wilmot Horton should be the trustees for settling the business. Dr. Lushington, however, thought the business could be settled more satisfactorily through Murray, to whom the advocate or Lady Byron herself may have written in guarded terms on a subject that, holding the attention of a bevy of persons, was the occasion of gossip and surmise in several coteries. Possibly a cautiously worded and undated note by the advocate or his client was the cause of the present Mr. Murray's impression that Lady Byron offered 2000*l.* for the 'Memoirs,' but the present writer has no knowledge that would justify him in assigning the misconception positively and authoritatively to any such cause. More than once the business was on the point of settlement. There were several schemes for liberating Moore from the serious responsibility he had incurred for the sake of other people. But the business hung on hand till 1828, when the poet was at length repaid in a singular manner, to be set forth on an ensuing page.



Never a rich man, Moore in the May of 1824 had for some years been in straitened circumstances. To relieve the pressure of the poverty that bore heavily on his friend, Byron authorized and encouraged him to sell the 'Memoirs,' and concurred with him in the deed of assignment. The facility with which Moore raised the 2000*l.* (or guineas) from 'friends in the City' for Mr. Murray's repayment must have struck the readers of this chapter as curious. 'Friends in the City'<sup>1</sup> are seldom so obliging to a not rich poet, as to lend him so large a sum. Should they ever be published, the Hobhouse MSS., in Lady Dorchester's keeping, will possibly explain *how* Moore was enabled to borrow the money so readily, and *why* he was so prompt in borrowing so large a sum merely to get possession of the documents, which he already knew would be destroyed the day after to-morrow. In the City the poet could of course have borrowed more than two thousand guineas to redeem the MSS., which Byron's death had made worth twice that sum, if he had been in a position to deposit the papers as security for the loan. But he was not in that position. His alacrity in borrowing the money at high interest would not have been surprising, if he had seen his way to sell the MSS. for a much larger sum to another publisher. But he knew the fate awaiting the papers when he borrowed the money; for on Friday, the 14th of May, Hobhouse went to him straight from Augusta, and told him the MSS. must be destroyed. The poet, therefore, knew well what he was doing when he went to 'his friends in the City.' And it may be taken for granted that the poet's 'friends in the City' knew what they were doing when they lent him two thousand guineas. Moore, of course, borrowed the money on an understanding of some kind that he would not suffer from his alacrity in doing the Byron family an important service. And his 'friends in the City,' of course, lent him the money on an intimation from persons of better financial credit than the poet, that they would not suffer for their confidence in the songster. So it was, that Moore went to the conclave in Albemarle Street, with notes in his pocket-book for Mr. Murray's repayment. It is worthy of remark that, though the

<sup>1</sup> 'The Friends in the City' are said to have been the Messrs. Longman. An entry in Moore's Diary shows that *before* the arrival of the dismal news from Missolonghi he was arranging with the Messrs. Longman to furnish him the money with which to redeem 'the Memoirs.' But of course when the City publishers consented to advance the money they did so not only on Moore's promise of repayment, but on Byron's security also, and in the hope that they would be the eventual publishers of the autobiography in an amended form. The case was altered when, after Byron's death, the MSS. were taken from Murray, only that they might be destroyed.



money was repaid to him *by* Moore, Mr. Murray did not regard himself as taking Moore's money, but the money put somehow or other into Moore's hands by 'the friends of Lord Byron.' This is obvious from a passage in the letter from Murray to Mr. Wilmot Horton, written on the 19th of May, 1824,—two days after the writer's receipt of the money. 'You will also be able to bear witness,' the publisher wrote, 'that, although I could not presume to impose *an obligation on the friends of Lord Byron* or Mr. Moore, by refusing to receive the repayment of the two thousand guineas advanced by me—yet I had determined on the destruction of the "Memoirs" without any previous agreement for such repayment:—and you know the "Memoirs" were actually destroyed without any stipulation on my part, but even with a declaration that I had destroyed my own private property,—and I therefore had no claim upon any party for remuneration.' Mr. Wilmot Horton never for an instant regarded Moore as paying away for the 'Memoirs' 2000*l.* (or guineas), without feeling confident that he would be repaid by the Byron family. Though he knew Moore was legally responsible for the money to his 'friends in the City,' Mr. Horton regarded the poet as in fact merely paying away the money of Lord Byron's friends, in accordance with their instructions. Regarding the poet as nothing more than the channel, Mr. Wilmot Horton also regarded him as the wrongly selected channel, through which the money had passed from Lord Byron's friends to the publisher. Hobhouse certainly took the same view of the affair. Colonel Doyle (Lady Byron's friend) took the same view of the transaction. No evidence has come to the present writer respecting Mr. Luttrell's view of the business; but if Mr. Luttrell imagined that Moore paid the money of his own mere motion, and without an assurance of protection from loss through the transaction, he was the only one of the six persons concerned in the destruction of the papers to credit Moore with such magnanimity.

As the actual borrower of the money, and the person who paid it away, Moore was, however, in a position to credit himself with this magnanimous behaviour, and he lost no time in telling his friends in London and Paris how grandly he had borne himself in the business. Writing on June 23, 1824, to the Marquise de Dolomien, Dame d'honneur of the Duchesse d'Orléans, from Sloperton Cottage, the poet said, 'Finding that his lordship's family felt such anxiety on the subject of these "Memoirs," I placed them at the disposal of the person whom I knew he loved best among them (his sister), and only suggested that the papers should not be entirely destroyed, but

that such parts as upon perusal should be found unobjectionable, might be preserved and published. It was the wish of his sister, however, that they should be utterly, and without any previous perusal, destroyed, which was accordingly done, and I paid back to the bookseller the two thousand guineas which he had advanced to me on the manuscript. The family have since been very anxious to be allowed to reimburse me this money, but I have declined their offer. I ought to mention the motive which determined me to give up the "Memoirs" was the knowledge that Lord Byron himself had lately expressed some regret at having written them.' Under the circumstances there is not much to censure severely in this droll piece of figuring on paper. It certainly was not strictly veracious. Moore knew at the time of writing that he did not give up the 'Memoirs' to Augusta or any one else; that having lost the power of redeeming them, he had lost the power of giving them away; that the MSS. were destroyed by their indisputable owner, Mr. Murray, from whose possession they went straight to the flames in his own drawing-room; and that, if he did not look for repayment of the two thousand guineas, he most certainly expected that he would be relieved by the Byron family of his obligation to repay the two thousand guineas to 'his friends in the City.' It is noteworthy that Moore still speaks of *guineas*, not pounds.

It is certain that Moore told nothing more than the truth,—indeed, he told less than the whole truth,—when he assured the Marquise de Dolomien his desire was 'that the papers should not be entirely destroyed, but that such parts as upon perusal should be found unobjectionable might be preserved and published.' On Sunday, May 16, 1824, Mr. Wilmot Horton (who wished the MSS. to be preserved under seal at the bank) impressed on Mrs. Leigh that both Moore and Murray were set against the contemplated destruction. That Moore opposed the destruction almost to the very moment when the MSS. were thrown into the publisher's grate we know from the statement of Mr. Murray, as well as from Moore's assertions. In the letter, written two days after the conflagration, the late Mr. Murray said to Mr. Wilmot Horton, 'Why Mr. Moore should have wished to preserve them I did not nor will not inquire.' With respect to Moore's strenuous and even stubborn resistance to the destruction, the present Mr. Murray wrote to the Editor of 'The Academy,' 'Mr. Moore, who alone for some time opposed the destruction, . . . This condition Moore did not fulfil; consequently his interest in the MS. entirely ceased on Byron's death; by which event the value of the MS. was greatly enhanced, probably doubled. This fact, no doubt, rendered Mr.



Moore more than ever anxious to recover the Autobiography. . . . The MS. however, by general consent, was destroyed, Mr. Moore, though reluctantly, concurring.' The present Mr. Murray's suggestion of a motive for Moore's action in fighting so stubbornly for the preservation of the documents is unfair to Moore. There being other and obvious reasons for Moore's action, there was no need for the insinuation that he wished to preserve the documents in order to sell them again at a large profit. Hobhouse having declared to him that the MSS. must and *should* be destroyed, Moore came to the conclave, well knowing that Hobhouse would have his way in the matter. Still the poet made a stubborn fight, at least a show of fighting stubbornly, for the preservation of the papers which he knew would be put on the fire, before the meeting separated. It was needful for the honour of Byron's selected biographer to do so, so that for the remainder of his days he might be able to say, 'I did my very best to preserve the papers.' Moreover, though he could not question the propriety of withholding from the public the MS. which Byron had himself determined to withhold from publication, Moore (as Byron's eventual biographer) of course wished to have the documents preserved, in order that, without precisely using them, he might be aided by them whilst writing his friend's history. The man, who had made himself personally responsible for the money borrowed in the City, who was the legal and actual borrower of the 2000 guineas, had another reason for wishing to preserve the MSS. Mere verbal promises, made in moments of excitement, are not always kept either to the word or to the spirit, when there has been time for the excitement to subside. Though he was sure that the persons who had engaged to see him through the business without loss meant to keep the verbal assurance, Moore knew enough of human nature to see the peril of his position, and to conceive the possibility that he would at some future day be required to repay out of his own pocket the money, obtained from 'his friends in the City.' In the event of this contingency arising, the existence of the 'Memoirs' would be of great service to the poet, who had ventured so much for the convenience and peace of Lord Byron's relatives. Should he be pressed for repayment with interest by his civic creditors, and should the Byron family repudiate an engagement put upon them by too zealous friends, so long as the MSS. remained in existence, especially if he were one of their custodians, Moore saw he would be in a position to protect himself. It is not wonderful, therefore, that he was reluctant to acquiesce in the destruction of his only material security against a serious loss.



At the time of the destruction, Moore expected to be relieved of his liability to 'his friends in the City' in a few days, at the most in a few weeks. But he was disappointed. Several arrangements for settling the business fell through; the chief difficulty being to devise a plan for the settlement, that should not expose Lady Byron to a suspicion of paying for the destruction of the documents, for whose destruction she was not accountable, either as instigator or approver. Moore's claim for the payment of the debt came to be associated in the minds of persons concerned in the business with Mr. Murray's quite reasonable expectations of some fair recompense for the loss he had sustained, by his spirited and most honourable acquiescence in the measures for sparing the feelings of Byron's relatives. Mr. Murray had received for his part in the destruction of the 'Memoirs' only the bare sum (without interest) which he had paid out of hand in 1821 for the MSS., that at the time of their destruction were worth twice as much. Under these circumstances it would have been strange had he not looked for some further remuneration. Notwithstanding the passages in his letter of May 19, 1824, to Mr. Wilmot Horton, which indicate a different state of feeling, it is certain that Mr. Murray did look for additional recompense, and that with proper delicacy and firmness he submitted his quite fair view of his own case to the persons best able to satisfy his reasonable expectations.

The whole business hung on hand till 1828. 'So matters,' the present Mr. Murray wrote in the letter to the Editor of 'The Academy,' 'rested till 1828, when the appearance of Leigh Hunt's "Byron and his Contemporaries" convinced my father that an authentic "Life of Byron," was demanded, for which only Moore and he were possessed of the necessary materials. He therefore arranged with Moore to prepare the "Life, Letters, and Journals of Lord Byron," which was published in 1830. For this Moore received the sum of 1600*l*. But (and this is the point which, in justice to my father's memory, I am anxious to state) *over and above the sum so paid*, Mr. Murray discharged Moore's bond with his creditors, upon which he had raised the 2000*l*. paid by him immediately after Byron's death; together with the interest thereon and other charges, amounting to 1020*l*. more. Thus making a total sum of 4620*l*.' It is not, of course, to be supposed that the late Mr. Murray paid Moore the preposterous sum of 770*l*. for each of the six fudging little volumes<sup>1</sup> of the 'Life,'—an execrably poor book of excellently

<sup>1</sup> This execrably poor book of excellent materials was first published in two volumes 4<sup>to</sup>.; but throughout my pages I have dealt with it as a work

good materials. Most of the good materials—the vivid and piquant letters from the poet to his publisher, and the letters which the poet had authorised the publisher to seek and gather from his correspondents—were no part of Moore's contribution to the noble stock of materials. With the aid of a hack, paid at the rate of four guineas a-week for a couple of years, Mr. Murray could have produced a much better book without Moore's help. Murray had no strong liking for Moore, and was well aware he could have produced a good 'Life' of the poet without Moore's assistance. The notion that so shrewd a master of his affairs paid 4620*l.* for Moore's co-operation is comical. The price the publisher really paid for that co-operation (1600*l.* for the six volumes, 266*l.* 13*s.* 4*d.* a volume) was munificent, almost to prodigality. It may be assumed that the present Mr. Murray, getting his information from insufficient records, unintentionally mixed up two separate and different pieces of business. The late Mr. Murray *did* (as his son alleges) discharge Moore's bond with his creditors, together with the interest and costs; but he should be regarded as having done so with money placed in his hands for that purpose. The publisher was chosen as the agent for satisfying Moore's claims on Byron's relatives; and a better agent for the delicate and strictly confidential business could not have been found than the publisher, a man of nice honour and so good a keeper of a secret, that he went to the next world without imparting this particular secret even to his own son. Moore certainly came well out of the business:—getting 2100*l.* for the destroyed 'Memoirs' and 1600*l.* for writing the 'Life:' in all 3700*l.* !!

From what has been said Dr. Elze may see how greatly he was mistaken when he wrote,—'In this affair the character of Lady Byron appears in the most unfavourable and unworthy light; for if she did not instigate, she certainly encouraged, the destruction of the "Memoirs," thus cutting off from her husband in the grave his chosen means of defence against the many calumnies heaped on his name on account of the separation, notwithstanding that the last word had by him been generously secured to herself.' Every statement of this sentence should be expunged. Byron did not write the 'Memoirs' to defend himself from calumnies, so much as to entertain the world with piquant anecdotes about his doings and the doings of other people, and to give a one-sided account of his quarrel with his wife. Though he had chosen this way of telling posterity what

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of six mean little volumes,—the form in which it is known to most people. The one-volume standard edition with a wretchedly bad index is an edition to be avoided.



to think of himself and others, he repented of his purpose, and two years before his death took steps to recover the power of withholding the record from publication. From May 1822, when he declared himself, in a legal deed, 'inclined to wish the said work not to be published,' the inclination grew steadily to a resolve that the narrative should not be given to the world. Partly from dilatoriness, chiefly from the influence of the circumstances which made him reluctant to part with two thousand out of the few thousand guineas in his hands, he had delayed redeeming the papers he meant to withhold. Had it not been for the emergencies of his Greek enterprise, he would probably have redeemed the papers before leaving Cephalonia. He had determined to withhold the composition from the press. Moore knew of this determination. He would, therefore, have been guilty of black treason to his friend, had he after Byron's death given the 'Memoirs' to the world. In truth, Moore is open to reproach for allowing so much of the substance and known spirit of the 'Memoirs,' which Byron had virtually suppressed as unworthy and reprehensible, to appear in those pages of the 'Life' that refer to Lady Byron and her relations. Hobhouse knew of Byron's determination; and from his knowledge how strongly set Byron was on the subject in the closing months of his life, he had no sooner heard of his friend's death than he decided to destroy at once the writings of which the poet had repented. How, then, can it be said that the destruction of the MSS. deprived Byron 'in the grave of his chosen means of defence'? For the destruction determined upon by Hobhouse before she was spoken to on the subject, Lady Byron was in no sense responsible. She neither instigated nor encouraged the destroyers.

Byron had ordered the suppression in terms that became, after his death, tantamount in Hobhouse's judgment to an order for the destruction. Moore, generally held accountable and almost as generally censured for the destruction, was not the destroyer of the writings—indeed, he was the only one of 'the six' to make a hard fight for their preservation. The one of 'the six' to see the need for immediate destruction, and, overbearing the opposition of Moore, Murray, and Wilmot Horton, to insist on the destruction, was John Cam Hobhouse. He ordered the deed and did it, out of loyalty to his dead friend, who had resolved that the foolish documents should not go to press.

And what has the world lost from the disappearance of the writings, over whose destruction there has been so much lamentation? Little, if anything, of importance. Nothing to enlarge our knowledge of the poet's nature, genius, habits, failings;—



certainly nothing to enlarge our knowledge of his virtues and more amiable characteristics. This much may be inferred confidently from what Byron himself tells us of the 'Memoirs' in his letters to Moore and Murray, and from what Moore (who had studied the 'Memoirs' carefully and remembered them well) says about them in the 'Life.' Doubtless the papers contained several piquant anecdotes of celebrated persons; but some of these diverting stories, probably the raciest of them, would under any circumstances have been withheld from publication by the discretion of their intended editor, who was warned by the poet to use the materials cautiously, as they contained things not to be divulged. That most of the stories, fit for general circulation, appeared in other Journals and collections of Memoranda by the poet's hands, and were transferred from them to the 'Life,' Moore is at pains to assure his readers. But the anecdotes were the unimportant and subordinate part of the fragmentary narrative, which in its more carefully written parts related almost entirely to circumstances connected with the writer's marriage, from his first proposal to Miss Milbanke till his departure from England. The main part of the Autobiography was in fact nothing but the poet's statement of his intercourse with and his case against his wife. The writer did not pretend that this statement was fair or otherwise than onesided. Even whilst assuring Moore that it was written 'with the fullest intention to be "faithful and true,"' Byron frankly admitted that it was 'not *impartial*,' adding passionately, 'No, by the Lord! I cannot pretend to be that while I feel.' In the same way he wrote of the 'Memoirs' to Murray: 'But you will find many opinions and some fun, with a detailed account of my marriage and its consequences, as true as a party concerned can make such accounts, for I suppose we are all prejudiced.' Byron was, therefore, alive to the unfairness and injustice of the narrative. He may even be said to have been sensible of the essential untruthfulness of the record; for when a man of Byron's temper confesses to having written on such a subject with partiality to himself, and prejudice against the object of his animosity, and imperfect truthfulness, it may be taken for granted that he does not make the criminatory admissions on slight grounds. What has the world lost by the disappearance of the narrative, which even in its author's opinion had these serious faults? In the author's poems and letters there is abundant evidence how Byron thought and wrote of his wife when he was too angry with her to have any care for justice and facts, and how he felt towards and spoke of her when in his irritation against her he tried to be just to her. Moreover, one

need not hesitate to say confidently what were the main lines and also what were the most notable details of the poet's prose story of his domestic troubles. Moore, the poet's sympathetic friend and warm partisan against Lady Byron, had carefully perused the story which, however unfair it may have been to the lady, was of course not wanting in consistency with her husband's steadiest and most familiar asseverations to her discredit. Having studied the story, Moore may be said to have had it by heart. To compare Moore's partial story of his friend's matrimonial troubles with Byron's ordinary statements on the same subject, and with all that both poets tell us about Byron's treatment of the same subject in the destroyed 'Memoirs,' is to have the strongest opinion that the biographer's account of his friend's unfortunate marriage is a reproduction from memory of the autobiographer's version of the affair.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

### BYRONIC WOMANKIND.

Completion of Lady Caroline's Distress—That Awful Legacy by Medwin—Teresa Guiccioli's Sacrifices for the Poet—Her Second Husband—Lady Byron's Hard Fate—The Valet's Verdict—The Sisters-in-Law after Byron's Death—Their Rupture—Moore's 'Life'—Lady Byron's 'Remarks' on the 'Life'—No Monomaniac—Dark Suspicions—The Origin of the Worst Slander—The Last Interview of the Sister-in-Law—Mrs. Leigh's Death—Revival of Lady Byron's Animosity.

THE hearse containing Byron's coffin had worked clear of London's north suburbs and far into the country, and was making its slow way through Hertfordshire, when in the neighbourhood of Brocket Hall (Lord Melbourne's seat) it was met by an open carriage, in which a lady of rank and fashion was seated, with a gentleman by her side. Moderating its speed this carriage passed the hearse and the followers at foot-pace. Before the carriage had fairly passed the gloomy train, its occupants were informed that the hearse held the poet's coffin, and was on its way to Nottinghamshire. 'What! Byron?' ejaculated the lady with a sharp cry, losing consciousness at the moment of the exclamation. The lady was Lady Caroline Lamb; the gentleman by her side was her husband.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> There are different versions of this strange story of a dramatic incident; one writer representing that Lady Caroline and Mr. Lamb were driving, a second that they were on horseback, a third that they were on foot. The story is told here as it should be told.

Byron's funeral was followed quickly by the publication of Medwin's 'Conversations;' the publication of Medwin's 'Conversations' was followed by the separation of William Lamb (afterwards Lord Melbourne) from the wife, whose levities, indiscretions, and exasperating ebullitions of temper, he had endured for so many years with noble equanimity and generous forbearance. The statements of the book, and the revelations and conflicts of feeling consequent on those statements, were the cause of Mr. Lamb's withdrawal from the lady, from whom he would have parted long before had he been a man of ordinary impulsiveness and vehemence. It is not to be understood that the separation was attributed by Mr. Lamb to the book or anything resulting from the book; but to the people who had Lady Caroline's confidence it was known—and admitted by the lady herself—that the book determined her fate. 'Medwin's talk completed her distress,' Lady Morgan remarks tenderly, in her scrappy notes of Lady Caroline's biographic confessions. Nothing else could have ensued from the publication of the volume which contains this passage:—'I am,' (Byron is represented as saying) 'easily governed by women, and she (Lady Caroline) gained an ascendancy over me that I could not easily shake off. I submitted to this thralldom long, for I hate *scenes*, and am of an indolent disposition, but I was forced to snap the knot rather rudely at last. Like all lovers, we had several quarrels before we came to an open rupture. . . . Even during our intimacy, I was not at all constant to this fair one, and she suspected as much. In order to detect my intrigues, she watched me, and earthed a lady into my lodgings—and came herself, terrier-like, in the disguise of a carman. My valet, who did not see through the masquerade, let her in; when, to the despair of Fletcher, she put off the man, and put on the woman. Imagine the scene! It was worthy of Faublas! Her after-conduct was unaccountable madness—a combination of spite and jealousy. It was perfectly agreed and understood that we were to meet as strangers. We were at a ball, she came up and asked me if she might waltz. I thought it perfectly indifferent whether she waltzed or not, and with whom, and told her so, in different terms, but with much coolness. After she had finished, a scene occurred, which was in the mouths of every one.' . . . Of William Lamb's carelessness respecting his wife's behaviour, Byron is represented as saying to Medwin, 'She was married, but it was a match of *convenience*, and no couple could be more fashionably indifferent to or independent of one another than she and her husband.' To her shame it must be recorded that Lady Caroline bore similar testimony against her husband, in



stronger language, when she said to Lady Morgan, 'He cared nothing for my morals. I might flirt and go about with what men I pleased. He was privy to my affair with Lord Byron, and laughed at it. His indolence rendered him insensible to everything. When I ride, play, and amuse him, he loves me. In sickness and suffering he deserts me. His violence is as bad as my own.' Spoken (as they appear to have been) at the crisis of her final rupture with her husband, these words may be taken as an indication of the temper in which she responded to his outbreak of displeasure at Medwin's tattle.

Of the view Lady Caroline Lamb took of the passages of Medwin's book that related to herself, there exists some noteworthy evidence in her own writing. One of her dateless letters to Lady Morgan, published in 'Lady Morgan's Memoirs, Autobiography, Diaries, and Correspondence' (edited by Hepworth Dixon)—a letter written in London, after the writer's separation from her husband, and immediately before her departure for the Continent—contains these words, 'Sir Charles Morgan was most agreeable and good-natured. *Faustus* is good in its way, but has not all its sublimity; it is like a rainy shore. I admire it because I *conceive* what I had *heard* translated elsewhere, but the end particularly is in very contemptible taste. The overture tacked to it is magnificent, the scenery beautiful, parts affecting, and not unlike Lord Byron, that dear, that angel, that misguided and misguiding Byron, whom I adore, although he left that awful legacy on me—by Medwin. Remember thee—and well.' In Hepworth Dixon's book this paragraph appears with an important error due to the carelessness of his copyist for the press, who mis-reading the two most important and perhaps the most distinct words of the legible letter inserted by mistake 'my memory' for 'by Medwin'—a strange slip that of course appears in the many reproductions of the passage in newspapers and magazines. The original MS., containing this reference to 'the awful legacy' Byron left the writer 'by Medwin,' is in the possession of Mrs. Hepworth Dixon.

It is *said* that William Lamb visited his wife and corresponded with her during the period that intervened between their separation and her death from dropsy, in her forty-second year, on January 26th, 1828. He certainly both wrote to her and came over from Ireland to her, when she was dying. She also certainly wrote to him from London on one occasion. Tenderly cared for by his family as well as her own people, Lady Caroline, in addition to the pleasure which came to her from his forgiveness of her wayward behaviour, had also the consolation of seeing her lofty-natured husband and conversing

with him, before it was too late for her to enjoy his presence and the music of his voice. He was by her side in her last moments ; and his was the generous right hand that wrote the tender notice of her death and character in the ' Literary Gazette ' of February 16th, 1828. ' There are,' he wrote, ' many yet living who drew from the opening years of this gifted and warm-hearted being hopes which her maturity was not fated to realise. To these it will be some consolation to reflect that her end at least was what the best of us might envy and the harshest of us approve.' To the last, tears used to rise to Lord Melbourne's eyes, when he thought of the wife who, needing his forgiveness much, had all of it that she needed. It is, perhaps, no extenuation of her most considerable faults and follies, that in her fantastic and flighty way she really loved the poet whom she injured so greatly,—possibly loved him, even when in her jealous wrath she was striking at him with the vicious energy of an enraged tigress.

After what has been said of Byron's relations with the Countess Guiccioli, the readers, who still believe he loved her in the manner alleged by Moore, must be left in the enjoyment of the fanciful misrepresentation, which the biographer sustained by falsifying one of the letters to Hoppner. That she conceived a vehement passion for Byron, and that on the subsidence of the passion she nursed a strong affection for him are matters scarcely to be questioned. But there has been much exaggeration respecting the salutary nature and beneficial consequences of her influence on the poet. For that exaggeration Moore is chiefly accountable, and Moore knew no more of the matter, and was indeed in no respect better qualified to form a sound judgment upon it, than any intelligent man of the world reviewing all the recorded circumstances of the case at the present time. Indeed, any person of the present generation, fairly endowed with judicial temper and sagacity, is in a much better position than Byron's authorized biographer ever was, to take a fair view of the Countess's character and influence over the poet ; for he would bring to the consideration of the subject a mind unbiassed by an attentive and sympathetic perusal of the destroyed ' Memoirs.' Moore's intimacy with Byron certainly gave him no peculiar fitness for dealing with this particular question, for he was never intimate with the Italian Byron, a very different person from the English Byron, of whom Moore had seen a good deal in the midst of the gaities and distractions of four London seasons. Of the Countess Guiccioli the biographer knew scarcely anything from personal observation. With the exception of the two or three occasions, when he spoke with her

at La Mira during his brief stay in Venice, Moore's intercourse with the lady was by the pen. The knowledge he gained of her on these occasions was necessarily superficial; the estimate he then formed of her must have been largely inferential and conjectural. All his other knowledge of her came to him from letters in the world's possession. It is not surprising that he took a far too favourable view of the lady's disposition, endowments, and power over his friend;—a view differing widely from the judgments of the several English persons who, with finer and more penetrating perceptivity, enjoyed far better opportunities for studying the Countess and observing her intercourse with the poet. Sanguine for the consequences of the liaison till he made Teresa Guiccioli's acquaintance, Shelley on becoming acquainted with her soon predicted she would repent her rashness; a prediction that certainly would not have been made had he not felt her insufficiency for the difficult task she had undertaken. Hoppner knew that, from the commencement of his association with the lady, Byron only cared for her as a libertine usually cares for a new mistress. To Leigh Hunt and the English ladies of Hunt's 'set' in Italy, it was manifest that Teresa had no enduring power over her cooling admirer. At Ravenna the poet murmured against her as an embarrassment, and in his diary grumbled at her folly in quarrelling with her husband; at Pisa he found amusement in worrying her; at Genoa he was longing to get out of her way; at Cephalonia he wrote her cold and brief notes in a language unfamiliar to her; in his dying moments he had not a thought for her. And what was Teresa Guiccioli's influence over Byron, while it lasted? It is absurd to speak of it as the influence that put an end to the Venetian excesses; for they had ended before he made her acquaintance. Instead of being the good angel, who raised the poet from the mire of his Venetian depravity, she was the bad angel, who detained him in Italy when he was disposed to return to England, and, had it not been for her power over him, would probably have returned to his native land and proper place in its society. With creditable feminine repugnance to the flippancies and indecencies of the earliest Cantos of 'Don Juan,' Teresa Guiccioli expressed her dislike of the poem as frankly and cordially as Mrs. Leigh declared her abhorrence of what she deemed the most reprehensible achievement of her brother's life. And so long as Byron wanted the heart to continue the work, which had been received by the English press in a way that put him out of conceit with the performance, Teresa Guiccioli induced him to lay the poem aside;—a fact that, taken by itself, would in the judgment of many persons seem to entitle her to



considerable respect. But when Byron wished to resume the discontinued enterprise, she had neither the power to prevent him from resuming it, nor the will to hold him to his promise not to resume it. The promise being that he would not continue the poem without her permission, she gave the permission as soon as she saw he would take it in French fashion, if it were not conceded. This speaks little for her power over him. Able to make him do what he wished, and leave undone what he had no desire to do, she could not even in the season of her strongest ascendancy over his actions withhold him from aught on which he had set his heart. If his enthusiasm for Italian unity and freedom was fanned and quickened by her words, it must be remembered that she opposed his enthusiasm for the Greek cause, and did her utmost to divert him from the expedition in which he found an honourable death.

Far too much, also, has been said of the sacrifices Teresa Guiccioli made for the poet's good. Moore speaks of the lady's sublime disinterestedness in surrendering the material advantages of her conjugal position for the sake of Byron's welfare and happiness. This matter is dealt with by the biographer, as though the sacrifices had no end in view but the poet's contentment and benefit; as though the Contessa had no thought for her own pleasure when she withdrew herself from the husband for whom she had no affection, and gave herself to the paramour whom she desired passionately; as though it were a rare thing in the world's history for a woman to be recklessly imprudent when she is violently in love; as though it were impossible for any but an exceedingly generous and magnanimous woman to pitch over a husband with great possessions for a suitor of smaller affluence. What were Teresa's sacrifices? She gave up a husband she did not care for, to join hands with a lover in whom she delighted. She went from the authority of an obscure Italian Count to the protection of a celebrated English peer. Her husband was old and formal, Byron was comparatively young and irresistibly charming. Her husband was rich (even to a revenue of 10,000*l.* English, a-year), but still no richer than her lover appeared and was reputed to be. Her husband lived with pomp and the show of affluence; so did her lover. By her husband she was checked and thwarted in half-a-hundred matters, whilst her lover delighted to humour and indulge her in every whim. No doubt, in exchanging her husband for her poet, she exchanged a secure position for a position of insecurity. After the wont of women in love, she could not realise the insecurity of the position to which she was flying. She, pretty simpleton, conceived the one to which she

was going would prove no less secure than the one she was leaving. The unrealised and unthought-for disadvantage of the condition she entered in the pursuit of her pleasure scarcely entitles her to praise for a sublime indifference to prudential considerations. If the disadvantage gives her conduct a colour of self-sacrifice, it must be admitted that in going from Count Guiccioli to Byron the Contessa sacrificed in the way of pecuniary advantage nothing more than wives usually sacrifice, when at the instigation of love and dislike they pass from their husbands to men who are not their husbands. She sacrificed no more, indeed considerably less, than Lady Carmarthen sacrificed, when she eloped from the heir to a wealthy dukedom and went off with penniless Jack Byron.

It should also be remembered that, knowing her husband could not marry again during her life, knowing he still remained her husband by the law of her church and country, knowing also the greatness of her power over him, Teresa Guiccioli never regarded herself as shut out from all possibility of restoration to his favour. At the moment of her flight from the Papal territory, Teresa could have remained in Romagna and avoided imprisonment in a cloister by returning to her husband, who was ready to receive her. It has been a matter of reproach against Byron that he made no provision in his will for the Contessa, who had sacrificed so much for his happiness. There was a time when he contemplated leaving her a legacy of 10,000*l.*, —the legacy she declined when he spoke to her of his purpose. Dr. Elze says, 'He should have made the necessary provision without consulting her; for to his proposal what could she give but a refusal?' Knowing the lady's case better than his biographers, it is conceivable that Byron took the lady at her word and forbore to leave her the money, scarcely less from care for the Contessa's interest, than for the interests of Mrs. Leigh and her children, to whom he wished to leave an adequate provision. Possibly his neglect to bequeath the Contessa the 10,000*l.* was due to his knowledge that she could at any time return to her husband, a sincere opinion that it would be best for her to go back to him, and a strong feeling that she would be more likely to take this best course, if she were left in straitened circumstances. Anyhow after Byron's death Teresa Guiccioli made up her differences with her husband, and went back to his protection. In the later term of her middle age (in 1851), Teresa Guiccioli was married to the Marquis de Boissy, the peer of France under Louis-Philippe and Senator of France under the Second Empire, whose fantastic hatred of the English nation was scarcely more comical than his

pride in having for his wife a woman who had been an Englishman's mistress. If it is not true, it may be taken for truth that this eccentric Marquis used to introduce his acquaintances to the lady, with this pithy announcement, 'Madame la Marquise de Boissy, ma femme, ci-devant maîtresse de Lord Byron.' That the Marquise saw nothing to resent in this brief statement of her claims to respectful consideration may be inferred from the spirit and tone of her 'Recollections of Byron.'

Some parting words must be given with respect to Lady Byron and the Honourable Mrs. Leigh. It would have been more accordant with biographical usage, and more agreeable to the feelings of the writer of this page, to dismiss those ladies from consideration with a few kindly words on the death of the famous man with whom they were so closely associated, and to say nothing or little of their subsequent years. Under ordinary circumstances it would be the duty of the personal historian to regard the closing years of their lives as matters of purely domestic story, not to be brought under the world's consideration. But there are occasions when the biographer's obligations constrain him to intrude on the privacy of individuals, and exhibit the incidents of their domestic seclusion. Lady Byron's action after her husband's death made her closing years an affair of history, to be investigated and dealt with like all other affairs affecting the life and character of the nation of which she was a unit;—made them unfortunately one of the saddest and dimmest chapters of the social story of England's nineteenth century. And it is not for those whose honour and dignity are most deeply affected by her fame, and whose feelings are most painfully troubled by public reference to what is most regrettable in her career, to deprecate the further discussion of incidents that burden and afflict the intellect and conscience of universal humanity. Remembering that they owe a duty to the nation and race whom they *should* love, as well as to the one individual whom they *did* and now that she is in her grave *do still love*, they should rather encourage and aid all honest efforts to wipe out to its last and faintest speck an infamy that, so long as any colour of it remains, is a stain on England's honour and a darkening of England's glory, as well as a blot on our great poet's reputation and a vile disfigurement of his humanity.

There is no need to speak hard words of the poor lady, who notwithstanding all her general disposition towards goodness and all her strenuous efforts to move righteously through life, did perhaps the evillest thing done by any woman of her race and period. On the contrary she has strong claims to sympathy and



compassion. Her lot was hard, her fate cruel. The barely conceivable woman, the one woman in ten thousand to be happy with Byron for a husband and make him happy with her for a wife, would have been an idolizing wife and at the same time a wife incapable of jealousy; devoted without being exacting; circumspect in all her ways (even as Lady Byron was) and yet tolerant of his levities and shortcomings; vivacious and buoyant, and at the same time possessing genuine meekness of spirit; a humourist capable of understanding his wild speech; a mistress of joyous wit and mirthful raillery, capable of lifting him out of his melancholy moods without ever irritating him by apparent want of sympathy; a companion invariably amiable and never vapid. It was less Lady Byron's fault than her misfortune that she had not this combination of needful endowments;—that she was wanting in most of them. It was altogether her misfortune that Byron, being what he was, insisted on making her love him in spite of herself; and that, being what she was, she yielded reluctantly to a suit few women could have resisted. More confident in his loveableness and goodness, than in her ability to be all he needed in a wife,—('If I am not happy it will be my own fault,' was her significant reply to Hobhouse's parting words, as she drove off from Seaham for the honeymoon),—she married him from love, and meant to be a good wife. In a few months she knew her incompetence for the high and difficult place into which she had been drawn. In seven or eight months she was at variance with her husband. Sixteen months after her marriage she had quarrelled with him, parted from him in bitterness, and been pilloried before the world's gaze as a captious and unforgiving woman. The fault of the quarrel was not all on one side. From girlhood she had been more conscientious and right-minded than amiable and happy-minded. Her nature was not flawless;—let her be stoned for that by those only who are void of imperfections. If Byron's temper was seriously defective, she also suffered from defects of temper. But her contribution to the domestic discord was light and trivial in comparison with Byron's offences against her. If she was 'unforgiving,' she certainly had much to forgive. They do her an injustice and Byron no real service, who laying it to her door that he did not live happily with her, speak of her as the only woman who could not manage him. What unfair use has been made of Fletcher's saying that 'all women could manage my Lord but my Lady!' As though a valet's opinion were worth a rush on so nice a question! It is absolutely untrue that Byron was easily managed by women in the long run. Any woman's fool so long as he was in love with her, he was a most

difficult man for each of his successive queens to manage as soon as he was out of humour with her. Which of the several women, who influenced him strongly for a while, managed him for any considerable time? Lady Caroline Lamb? Their friendship was a succession of quarrels; and in the end he quarrelled with her more fiercely than he quarrelled with her cousin. Jane Clermont? With all her cleverness and piquancy and sentimental responsiveness, she kept him in hand for fewer months than his wife had done. Marianna Segati, whom he certainly loved as much as the Countess, by whom she was succeeded after an interval? The reader remembers the course and finish of that liaison. Teresa Guiccioli, who 'nagged' at him at Pisa and bored him to death at Genoa? And yet we are to believe the poet was manageable by any woman, because his valet said so!

Human nature being what it is, and Lady Byron's nature what it was, circumstances forbade the hope that her affection for her sister-in-law would survive Byron's death by many years. It is certain that the poet's sisterless wife entered wedlock with a disposition to live on the most affectionate terms with his sisterless sister. Advancing to Augusta with heartiness, Lady Byron found a congenial friend in her sister-in-law, and 'took to her' (as the familiar phrase goes) with a warmth and thoroughness that delighted the poet. When the poet made his will, assigning to Augusta for life and afterwards to her children, nearly all that remained to him of his possessions beyond what he had devoted to the provisions of his settlement on his wife, Augusta was not more delighted than Lady Byron by the arrangement. It was to Augusta that Lady Byron throughout her brief personal association with her husband looked for sympathy, counsel, guidance, in all her troubles. Instead of telling her jealous annoyance at Byron's frequent visits to Melbourne House to her own mother, she confided it to Augusta. When she mistrusted her ability to manage Byron by herself, the young wife sought to rule him through his sister. During the troublous months in which Ada came to the world, Augusta was everything to Lady Byron,—nurse in sickness, consoler in sorrow, the only sunshine of the deepening gloom. When Lady Byron journeyed from Piccadilly to Kirkby Mallory, hoping that Byron would pay Leicestershire a visit in the following month,—a visit that should result in the birth of an heir to his peerage,—it was an unspeakable comfort to her to know that Augusta (the only person who understood Byron and knew how to manage him) was at her brother's side. For days before Byron learned from Sir Ralph Milbanke his wife's purpose to repudiate him, Augusta knew of

her sister-in-law's determination. The mutual confidence of the sisters-in-law was perfect, their mutual affection perfect. Though Dr. Lushington admonished her to keep away from Augusta till the most painful of the business about the separation was over, Lady Byron could not return from London to Leicestershire, after seeing her lawyer, without having an interview with her sister-in-law, before the latter went back to Cambridgeshire. Loyal and staunch to her brother throughout that miserable time, Augusta was no less loyal and steadfast to her sister-in-law. When the deed of separation had been signed, Byron declared that from the commencement of his domestic troubles, although Augusta had been his companion for weeks, he had never heard her speak or known her write a single unkind word of his wife. In truth, Augusta's courageous devotion to her sister-in-law seemed to strengthen, and gain strength from, her generous devotion to her brother. And Lady Byron was fully informed of Augusta's loyalty to her in her absence, and was deeply grateful to her for it. Throughout the eight wretched years that intervened between the separation and Byron's death, the relations of the two sisters-in-law underwent no diminution of cordiality. Though Hobhouse entreated Augusta to be mistrustful and cautious of Lady Byron, less communicative to her of news that came to her from or about Byron, he admonished and warned in vain. And all throughout those same years Lady Byron's bearing to Augusta was one of confidential affectionateness. How Augusta was the channel through which Byron received intelligence of his child, the reader has not forgotten. Nor has he forgotten the significance of the poet's last (unfinished) letter to Augusta. The intelligence of Byron's death had no sooner reached England than Lady Byron and Augusta were in communication about the destruction of the 'Memoirs.'

For some years after Byron's death—to be precise, for something more than five years and eight months,—these relations of mutual sympathy and confidence were maintained in the intercourse of the two sisters-in-law; the wife whose unforgiveness had become a by-word with lettered people over the whole world, and the sister whose voice, even when modulated to accents of reproof, was sweet music,—the sister of whom the dead had written,—

‘Though human, thou didst not deceive me,  
Though woman, thou didst not forsake,  
Though loved, thou forborest to grieve me,  
Though slandered, thou never couldst shake ;



Though trusted, thou didst not disclaim me,  
Though parted, it was not to fly,  
Though watchful, 'twas not to defame me,  
Nor mute, that the world might belie.'

But it was not in the nature of things that the wife, whose opportunities for reconciliation to the great master of song were in the grave, should persist for another five years in the spirit of sisterly affectionateness to the woman who seemed to have robbed her of the honour and glory that were hers by right of marriage. The last five years had been years of unutterable trial, scorching humiliation, and gnawing remorse to Lady Byron, who in every indication of the change of sentiment for the poet, and every proof of the growing admiration of his genius, saw a sign of the increasing disrespect in which she was held—or at least felt herself to be held. It was small solace to her that the world forebore to upbraid her, and with utterances of condescending compassion for her sorrows veiled the opinion that the sorrows, though severe, were no undeserved punishment. She knew the world's judgment of herself from the tone in which it spoke of *him*. His words were on every one's lips, his fame had passed into his country's glory. People no longer gossiped of his frailties and errors, but rendered homage to the genius that afforded them the larger part of their highest delight. The *mauvais sujet* had become the world's hero, his censors had come to be regarded as the world's enemies. Ten years since, had she told aloud the real story of her husband's offences against her, the general verdict on the case would have been in her favour. But now, the fullest statement of her case would have been received as tantamount to a confession of her conjugal impatience, selfishness, and disloyalty. The time had passed for her to speak to her own advantage. Henceforth it would be for her to hold her tongue in her own interest. She would only provoke exclamations of abhorrence by an avowal that she had indeed broken away from her husband, because his petulance irritated her, because his unkind words exasperated her, and because his determination to travel, when he ought to have been content to remain in England, worried her. In charity and pity people were silent about her; and their silence was a whip of fire to her pride. And whilst mute tongues declared her condemnation, the lands resounded with the praises of her sister-in-law. It was ever in the widow's mind how the glory about Augusta's brow might have dwelt upon her own head. If she had not seen the manuscript of the 'Epistle to Augusta,' so long withheld from the press by Mrs. Leigh's care for her sister-in-law's peace of mind, Lady Byron knew the 'Stanzas to

Augusta,' by heart. Lady Byron would have had a faultless temper, a flawless nature, to persist in loving Augusta to the last.

A rupture between Lady Byron and Mrs. Leigh was inevitable, provided they survived Byron for a considerable period; and the rupture took place between the later part of November 1829 and the later part of February 1830. The time of the quarrel is noteworthy. Though they quarrelled like gentlewomen, they quarrelled bitterly. No one will be surprised to hear that they differed on a trivial matter, *i. e.* put their quarrel on a trivial matter, distinct from the real cause of Lady Byron's soreness against her sister-in-law. At the outset of the affair Mrs. Leigh was excusably though distinctly wrong; soon the wrong was altogether on Lady Byron's side. Mrs. Leigh gave her sister-in-law cause for transient displeasure; and Lady Byron, magnifying a venial indiscretion into an unendurable outrage, made it an affair of war.

By her brother's will—the will which at the time of its execution occasioned Lady Byron so much generous gratification—Mrs. Leigh was interested in the 60,000*l.* in the hands of the trustees of Lady Byron's marriage-settlement. 'Now I do hereby give and bequeath all the remainder of the purchase money to arise,' runs a clause of the poet's will, 'by sale of my said estate at Newstead, and all the whole of the said sixty thousand pounds, or such part thereof as shall not become vested and payable under the trusts of my said marriage-settlement, unto the said John Cam Hobhouse and John Hanson, their executors, administrators, and assigns, upon such trusts, and for such ends, intents, and purposes, as hereinafter directed of and concerning the residue of my personal estate;'—the main ends and intents being that Mrs. Leigh should enjoy the revenue during her life, and that after her death the capital should in due course be distributed in accordance with the directions of the will amongst her issue. Mrs. Leigh's income from the property left her by her brother was therefore affected by the interest accruing from the 60,000*l.* in the hands of the trustees of Lady Byron's marriage-settlement. Being poor for her condition of life, Mrs. Leigh had need of whatever increase might come to her from a better investment of the money; and she was naturally desirous—may even at times have been too urgent—that the money in which she was interested should be invested so as to yield her the greatest possible advantage.

Under these circumstances it is not surprising that, when there was need for an appointment of a new trustee of the money in which she was interested, Mrs. Leigh wished for



the appointment of one in whose zealous and watchful care for her advantage she could confide. As she was not a woman of affairs, it is not wonderful that she spoke to Lady Byron and other persons of her acquaintance as though she had at least a moral right to a voice in the appointment of the new trustee of her sister-in-law's marriage-settlement. Of course she should have held her tongue on the matter. In making it a grievance that her wish in the affair was disregarded she was guilty of an indiscretion, which should have been met by Lady Byron with a few such kindly words as, 'No, I can't oblige you in this matter, Augusta; I must have my way in this matter; but you may be sure, my dear, that your interests shall be looked after.' But Lady Byron—by this time a woman of middle age, sorrowful and embittered in heart, sensitively tenacious of her 'rights,' and very sore against Augusta—could not take a fair and amiable view of the trumpery matter. Discovering in the affair an unwarrantable intrusion on her authority, Lady Byron was indignant in the superlative degree. There was indignation on the other side. There usually is indignation on both sides, when ladies differ on a matter of business and dignity and feeling. Mrs. Leigh's indignation soon subsided into sorrow at having offended her sister-in-law, and a desire to prevent the misunderstanding from causing a permanent breach between them. On seeing how much Lady Byron was incensed, Mrs. Leigh would fain have conciliated her. But Lady Byron would not consent to reconciliation. All these matters are given thus precisely, because of their obvious relation to the state of mind in which it was possible for Lady Byron to think and speak of her sister-in-law as she did think and speak of her in later time. It is a fact that in her anger against Mrs. Leigh for an excusable indiscretion, and a few warm words arising out of the dispute about that indiscretion, Lady Byron determined to withdraw both herself and Ada from her sister-in-law. By her conduct to Augusta, Lady Byron certainly justified Byron for pinning to her fame the galling epithet of 'unforgiving.' The monstrous story told by Mrs. Beecher Stowe was far more the result of Lady Byron's animosity against Augusta than of repugnance to the poet's libertinism.

Whilst the two gentlewomen were differing on so slight an occasion for serious difference, other matters happened to aggravate Lady Byron's dislike of the sister-in-law with whom she had lived for so long a period in close intimacy and affectionate confidence. Lady Byron's quarrel with Augusta on the trivial pretext was not consummated till the later part



of February 1830;—the month in which she read with reasonable indignation Moore's 'Life' of her husband. Beginning in November 1829 the disagreement of the sisters-in-law had in no degree abated, when the volumes of Moore's 'Life' came to Lady Byron. Dislike of Augusta had for several weeks agitated Lady Byron, when she wrote and dated (February 19, 1830) her 'Remarks on Mr. Moore's Life of Lord Byron,'—a letter, that of itself disproves the story told to Mrs. Stowe, by its avowal that after her arrival at Kirkby Mallory the writer was a promoter *of* and party *to* Lady Noel's invitation to Byron to come to them in Leicestershire. Lady Byron's belief in her husband's insanity would not account for her concurrence in that invitation, had she only two days earlier (whilst thinking him insane) fled from him with the determination of never holding intercourse with him again. Another matter to be noticed in connexion with the 'Remarks' (February 19, 1830) is the suggestion that the writer's persistence in silence as to the real and revolting cause of her departure from Piccadilly was a tender concern for Mrs. Leigh's reputation and feelings. When the 'Remarks' were being written tender concern for Augusta had passed from Lady Byron.

Though she made her bitter quarrel with Augusta on the paltry matter of the trusteeship, Moore's 'Life' may be held largely accountable for the energy with which Lady Byron pushed the quarrel in its latest stages, and for the bitter feeling that animated her against her sister-in-law even to the grave, and beyond the grave. It is not wonderful that she was exasperated and maddened by the book which, so far as she was concerned, was the reproduction of the defamatory 'Memoirs,' for whose destruction so much pains had been taken, so much scandal provoked, and so much money spent—in vain, so far as her feelings were concerned. The book that clothed the unforgiving wife with ignominy, glorified her sister-in-law. If Lady Byron had never seen the 'Epistle to Augusta' in manuscript, she now read in type that sacred outpouring of the affection, which had been diverted from the wife, who should have earned it, to the sister who so richly deserved it. If she had never studied the awful 'Incantation' lines of 'Manfred,' she now perused them with the aid of the biographer who was at pains to make her realise all their terrifying significance,—

'Though thy slumber must be deep,  
Yet thy spirit shall not sleep ;

Though thou see'st me not pass by,  
Thou shalt feel me with thine eye.'

Ere long she had an opportunity for studying 'The Lines on hearing that Lady Byron was ill.' Is it strange that the proud, nervous, too self-respecting woman abhorred Augusta, was quick to think evil of her, was eager to justify her abhorrence of her to her own conscience, was desirous of making the world share in the abhorrence? Is it strange she could persuade herself that Augusta rejoiced in the 'Life,' had even inspired much of the book, which was designed to make Byron's wife shameful and Byron's sister glorious throughout all coming time?

What followed must be considered by the light of the fact that Lady Byron lived to detest and abominate her sister-in-law;—the Augusta towards whom Lady Byron is represented by simple, foolish Mrs. Stowe, as overflowing to the last with Christian charity. It is not suggested that Lady Byron deliberately set herself to work to frame and disseminate defamatory stories of her sister-in-law, knowing the stories to be false inventions at the moment of making and divulging them. Had she been guilty of even that wickedness, human charity would not be without excuses for the miserable woman, groaning under a burden of shame too heavy, writhing under torture too acute, for her powers of endurance. But it is far more probable—indeed, it may be taken for certain, in so far as such an hypothesis may be dealt with as a certainty—that Lady Byron (a rightly meaning, though often a very wrongly feeling woman, to the last; a woman sincerely set on being good and doing good) believed everything she said to her sister-in-law's discredit; believed the monstrous and absolutely false tale she told to Mrs. Beecher Stowe, and (with divers variations) to so many other people, that there is no ground for questioning the substantial accuracy of Mrs. Stowe's record of the communications made to her.

It is the fashion of many persons to speak of Lady Byron as the victim in her later years of monomania on this subject; but the word in no fair way represents the condition of her mind, which never was mad or unsettled or disordered in such a manner as to justify a writer in rating her with sufferers from insanity. To the last she was a clear and precise observer, and expressed her thoughts with lucidity, coherence and vigour. To the last she had a subtle and logical mind. By no definition of insanity, that would be entertained seriously by a Lunacy Commissioner, was she an insane person. How then did it come about that, being unquestionably sane, she could take so mad and absolutely wrong a view of her husband, whom she regarded affectionately after his death, and of the woman who had been her close and beloved friend for nearly fifteen years? It is not difficult to answer this question.



At all times an assiduous reader of her husband's works, Lady Byron found a fascinating employment in discriminating between the egotistic, the sympathetic, and the imaginative elements of the compositions, and in forming a conception of his character and a history of his career out of the matters she classified under the first head. In her well-known and often published letter (written in 1818) to Lady Anne Barnard she wrote, 'In regard to his' (Byron's) 'poetry, egotism is the vital principle of his imagination, which it is difficult for him to kindle on any subject with which his own character and interests are not identified; but by the introduction of fictitious incidents, by change of scene and time, he has enveloped his poetical disclosures *in a system impenetrable except to a very few*, and his constant desire of creating a sensation makes him not averse to be the object of wonder and curiosity, *even though accompanied by some dark and vague suspicions.*' Excellent as a precise and accurate description of Byron's poetical method, this passage is also noteworthy as an illustration of the pleasure Lady Byron found in examining her husband's works, line by line, in a detective spirit,—of her practice of reading them in this spirit,—and of her confidence that she was one of the very few persons, capable of penetrating the subtle webs of mystification, under which the poet veiled his egotisms, hiding himself even whilst he was in the act of revealing himself.

Taught by the poet himself, as we have seen in earlier chapters of this work, to accept his poems as autobiographic confessions, the multitude took every stanza and line of his writings from the first Canto of 'Childe Harold' to the latest of 'Don Juan' as so much information about the adventures, experiences, habits, temper, passions, sentiments of the author himself. Readers of finer culture and nicer judgment knew that the sincere sentiments of the man were puzzlingly and inseparably intermingled with the sentimentalities of the poet and the pure inventions of the creator; and were generally of opinion that after throwing off one of these medleys of genuine feeling, playful fancy, and poetical conceit, the poet himself would have been unable to say what of it was fact, what was fiction, and what was simply perverse contradiction of fact. To most of these readers of culture and discrimination it was enough to enjoy the poem, without troubling themselves to inquire what of it came from the writer's heart, what from his brain, and what from the pure waywardness of his nature,—what of it came from his personal experiences and what from the experiences of other persons. At the same time there were a few readers whose chief delight in a new poem by Lord Byron



was the pleasure they found in dissecting it and analysing it, and separating the Byronic realism from the Byronic idealism of every passage. Lady Byron was one of the *very few*, who could penetrate all the mysteries, solve all the riddles, and explain all the perplexities of every 'poetical disclosure: '—one of the very few who could seize the real Byron under any disguise, and never mistook for a piece of the real man anything of specious show which he had used for the sake of its misleading effectiveness on the uninitiated vulgar. Reading Byron's works in this way in the second year of her separation from him, Lady Byron continued to read them in the same spirit and with the same confidence in her sagacity, in the fifth year of her widowhood—and afterwards, when animosity against Augusta, impairing her critical perceptivity and disturbing her judgment, disposed her to believe any evil thing of her dead husband, provided her sister-in-law showed as the companion and sharer of his guilt. In these later stages of her career, the Byron, who rose to Lady Byron's view out of the misread and miserably-misbrooded-over pages of 'Manfred' and 'Cain,' was indeed 'an object of wonder and curiosity;' but instead of being the real Lord Byron, he was a fictitious monster begotten of the reader's 'dark and vague suspicions.'

It is also worthy of remark that Lady Byron was disposed to entertain these dark and vague suspicions by the influence of the most odious of all the slanderous rumours, that were active to her husband's infamy, long before it ever occurred to her to conceive him guilty of aught more flagrant than ordinary libertinism. Originating in the Genevese tattle about Byron's intimacy with the two sisters-by-affinity on the banks of Lake Lemán, this most hateful of all the poisonous calumnies grew out of unwholesome gossip that had no reference whatever to his own sister.

Let it not be imagined that Lady Byron and Mrs. Leigh never saw one another again. The present writer *believes* (on grounds which would not justify him in saying he *knows*) that, with the exception of the single occasion, to which attention will be called immediately, they never again held intercourse by word of mouth. The bitter quarrel of 1829-30, a quarrel arising from reasons so widely different from its pretext, a quarrel made on grounds so trivial but for considerations so serious, may have been so patched up that they met again with the forms of civility and a hollow show of friendship. Intercourse they must have had through the post and their agents on matters of business and domestic moment; but it is believed by the present writer that the breach never was so patched up and

covered over. But on this point he may be mistaken. It is, however, certain that 1830 saw the death and interment of the old cordially affectionate relations between the sisters-in-law ;—that they never came together again in *heart*. Two persons are needful for a quarrel ; but it is enough for one of them to be bent on making the quarrel, or sustaining it when made. This quarrel had only one maker and one sustainer ; and the person to make and sustain it was not the person, who gave the trivial offence, that became the excuse for so serious a rupture. It is certain that from 1830 to 1851, Lady Byron regarded her sister-in-law with growing animosity, as a woman who had done her grievous injury. Whether it was nursed secretly (as it sometimes was) or declared to others (as it occasionally was), this dislike of the woman, whom she accused of darkening her honour and destroying her happiness, infatuated Lady Byron. It is also certain that this poisonous animosity disposed Lady Byron to conceive and believe enormous evil of her sister-in-law. It is also certain that—whether it covered the whole twenty-one years since the appearance of Moore's 'Life,' or was an affair of shorter duration—the total estrangement of the two sisters-in-law had existed for a long period, when they had their last interview under the following remarkable circumstances.

On a certain Tuesday morning of April 1851, an aged lady, having the appearance of an extreme invalid, came to the London Bridge Station and seated herself in a first-class carriage of the next train for Reigate,—the place of her destination. At a glance it was obvious that she could never have been beautiful ; must even in the spring of her youth have been plain. But the signs of sickness and sorrow in her countenance made her interesting to her fellow-travellers and won their sympathy. She was indeed a woman of sorrows, and had made acquaintance with griefs unimagined by most of her sex. Of those griefs too much has been told elsewhere. She was Byron's sister, stricken with years and illness, and within a few months of the hour when trouble and unkindness ceased to vex her.

A loiterer on the platform of the Reigate Station, waiting for the arrival of this train, would have seen amongst the persons about him a man-servant in drab livery. On the arrival of the down train, this footman bestirred himself. Taking a lady's calling-card from his pocket, he hastened to the first-class carriages, and went from carriage to carriage, holding out the card to the view of the occupants of the seats. At last he came to the carriage in which Mrs. Leigh was seated. On seeing the card with Lady Byron's name upon it, Mrs. Leigh declared herself the person he was seeking. The man said a fly was in attendance ; and in



another minute, Mrs. Leigh was driving to the White Hart Hotel of Reigate. On leaving the carriage at the door of the inn, she was shown to a private room, where Lady Byron and the Reverend Frederick Robertson, of Trinity Chapel, Brighton, were expecting her appearance. Lady Byron, an invalid, had come from Brighton with the clergyman for an interview with her sister-in-law. During the long years that had passed since their estrangement, Augusta had often wished for friendly speech with her sister-in-law. It had come to Mrs. Leigh's knowledge that she was said by Lady Byron to have been the influence that prevented the poet from coming to just and kindly views respecting his wife. There were times when Lady Byron's chief sorrow was that she and her husband had not been reconciled before his death: times when her greatest complaint against Mrs. Leigh was that the reconciliation would have taken place, had not she used her influence over her brother to perpetuate the estrangement. In fact, Byron had never been more certain that Mrs. Clermont was the chief cause of the separation, than Lady Byron became at these times that but for Augusta the separation would have been of no long continuance. Byron would have come to just views about her, if Augusta had not prolonged the mischief:—this was the complaint of Byron's widow. It having been reported to Mrs. Leigh that Lady Byron was possessed by this fancy, and spoke bitterly of her for other matters, Augusta imagined that she could disabuse her sister-in-law of this and other painful notions, if she could only get speech with her, face to face. Hence Augusta's desire for an interview with the sister-in-law, who had in former time loved her. Hence it was that she travelled from London, hopeful for good from this meeting at the White Hart Hotel. The one invalid lady living at Brighton and the other in London, and each of them being too weak for the journey to and fro between London and Brighton on the same day, it had been arranged that they should meet at this half-way house. The sisters-in-law cannot be said to have met on equal terms; for whilst Mrs. Leigh came to the meeting unattended, Lady Byron came to it, attended by the clergyman who was just then her most confidential spiritual adviser.

Knowing she had not long to live, and holding the old simple notion that the words of the dying are strong to convince even the most suspicious and incredulous hearers, Mrs. Leigh journeyed to Reigate, hoping that the assurance of her lips (so soon to be still for ever) would relieve Lady Byron's mind of its misconceptions,—more especially of the quite groundless notion that she had been the cause of her brother's persistence in unkindly



feeling towards his wife. No good resulted from this curious meeting, which opened with Mrs. Leigh's solemn assurance that in former time she had been loyal alike to her brother and his wife. To this assurance, Lady Byron replied with a show of surprise that her sister-in-law had nothing more to say. Mr. Robertson looked as though he were puzzled,—as though he and Lady Byron were being trifled with. What more Lady Byron and Mr. Robertson expected to hear from Mrs. Leigh does not appear. That they had come to Reigate for some larger and more momentous communication was obvious from their words and looks; and it may well have distressed Mrs. Leigh after her return to town, to know that Mr. Robertson suspected her of refraining at the last moment from saying what she ought to have said, and what she had come there to tell him and Lady Byron. These expressions of dissatisfaction on the part of Lady Byron and the clergyman were followed by words between the ladies, that did not make them better friends. Lady Byron directly charged Mrs. Leigh with aggravating Byron's bitterness to her, and encouraging him to remain in enmity towards her. Mrs. Leigh repelled the accusation warmly, and, in support of her assertions that she had consistently and invariably done her best to be a peace-maker, quoted certain words spoken by Hobhouse,—words that agitated Lady Byron profoundly, causing her to start and change colour. Of course, no good came of all this. Lady Byron returned to Brighton with a determination never again to see or hold communication with her sister-in-law. And Mrs. Leigh went back to London in grief at Lady Byron's perplexing treatment of her. Mrs. Leigh would fain have seen Mr. Robertson again, to satisfy him by the exhibition of letters that she had spoken nothing but the truth to Lady Byron in his hearing. But as he was of opinion no good could come of the interview or from his examination of the documents, the clergyman declined to see her again on the matter or go further into the business. It is nothing to Mrs. Leigh's discredit that Mr. Robertson regarded her with something more than suspicion; for his mind was wholly prepossessed by the representations of the other lady.

Six months later when Mrs. Leigh was on her death-bed sinking slowly, there were indications of a revival of affection for her sister-in-law in Lady Byron's breast. But neither of the sisters-in-law saw the other again; and though she seems to have relented to Augusta under the shadow of approaching death, it is certain that Lady Byron's animosity against her husband's sister revived soon after the grave had closed over her. Though she often helped them with her purse, and was their fitful

benefactress, Lady Byron's relations with Mrs. Leigh's children were not altogether to her credit. Sometimes her action towards them countenanced the opinion that she valued them and felt amiably to them, in proportion as she could use them as instruments for their mother's annoyance or discredit, and disregarded them in proportion as they distinguished themselves by devotedness to their much-suffering parent. After Mrs. Leigh's death, Lady Byron did her utmost to lower Augusta in the esteem of one of her more faithful and affectionate children. The animosity that made her desirous of setting the child against the mother who had passed away, was not inoperative in Lady Byron's breast, when she told evil of her dead sister-in-law to comparative strangers; when she told the hideous story to so slight an acquaintance as Mrs. Beecher Stowe, well knowing that Mrs. Stowe was a person not unlikely to communicate it to the world. But enough has been said to show that Lady Byron's animus towards her sister-in-law was not (as simple Mrs. Stowe imagined) the animus of a Christian woman overflowing with charity and tenderness to one of her own sex.

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## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### A PARTING NOTE.

The whole of the Evil—Byron's several Failings—Gifts and their Givers—Seventy Years since—Now and Then—The Change of Manners—One of its Causes—Thurlow and Nelson—Free-living and Free-thinking—The Man and his Times.

ALL the ill that can be truly told of Byron has been set forth in these pages, together with much of the good. The grateful worshipper of his genius, who has called attention to his fine sensibilities and generous impulsiveness, his kindness and courage, has palliated none of the failings, has extenuated none of the errors, has exhibited every one of the infirmities of the extraordinary man, who has stirred England more deeply than any other poet since the earlier years of the seventeenth century, who has influenced human kind outside England more widely and profoundly than any writer of our literature, and who, in whatever else of his aspirations he failed, will be found in the slowly moving ages to have achieved his ambition to be 'remembered in his line with his land's language.' His passions and pettinesses, his follies and foibles, his sins against himself and

others, have been recorded. The evil of him has been told in every particular, told with emphasis; no ugly fact has been glossed; each dark matter has been brought out to the light of heaven. And this has been done, so that on closing this volume the reader may be confident that he knows all the worst, though by no means all the good, of the poet's cruelly misrepresented life, and in that confidence may dismiss at once and for ever, as poisonous falsehood, all the odious untrue things that have been uttered to his infamy.

By many readers it will be said that, after being relieved of all the stains put upon him by slander, the real Byron was a man of numerous blemishes and infirmities. Be it so. Where is the man without some of the defects of human nature? Why should a higher standard of moral excellence be demanded in a poet, whose genius is in a great degree the result of physical endowments and qualities that render him more liable than other kinds of men to irregularities of thought and action? Instead of fancying that the highest poetical faculty exempts its possessor from the temptations of desire, and defends him against the forces making for certain forms of immorality, people should rather regard that faculty—not more divine in its fruits than human in its source—as a perilous gift that entitles its holder to the largest measure of charitable allowance for his deviations from the sober ways of men less sensitive and excitable. It will be no hurtful consequence, should this volume make readers see more clearly than heretofore that poetical genius does not necessarily dispose its possessor to moral orderliness. Good will come of it, should this survey of a marvellous being's scarcely edifying story teach readers that they should enjoy and criticise a great poet's writings without feeling it their duty at the same time to sit in judgment on his domestic errors. People should accept an artist's gifts without being over-curious and severely censorious respecting the giver's private habits and fireside eccentricities. The faultiness of the latter is no reason for declining the former. If it could be shown that all the evil things said of Byron fall short of the truth, his writings would be no less delightful; could he be proved to have been as pious as Heber, his poetry would be none the better.

Moreover, in respect to his private morality, Byron should be judged (if judged at all), not by the notions of propriety and the sentiment of these later times of the nineteenth century, but with due reference to the views and manners of English Society in the century's earlier decades. If he was a libertine, it must be remembered that he lived in times when libertinism was general. Of all the differences between the England of to-day



and the England of seventy years since, none is more noteworthy than the present reprobation of certain kinds of domestic immorality that were regarded in Byron's day with a leniency which is remembered in this year of grace with astonishment. The abolition of duelling is largely accountable for this remarkable change of social sentiment and manners. So long as every father, husband, brother, was free to avenge with the pistol the wrongs done him by libertinism, society troubled itself little about the offences of libertines. Instead of going out of their way to punish violators of the seventh commandment English gentlemen left such offenders to be dealt with at ten paces by the immediate sufferers from their offences. In truth, they were not without a certain sympathy and admiration for the offender, who following his favourite pleasure with the pistol in his hand, in times when physical daring was valued at something more than its proper worth, could at least claim credit for personal courage. Under these circumstances the world tolerated and even smiled at irregularities, which now that individuals may no longer defend themselves against them by process of bloodshed, are checked by the wholesome social sentiment that declares them odious outrages. In the England of Byron's childhood, bishops and deans were delighted to dine with Lord Thurlow in Great Ormond Street, at the same table with the Chancellor's mistress and illegitimate children. The England of the poet's boyhood idolized Nelson, although he quarrelled with his wife and found a Teresa Guiccioli in Lady Hamilton. The England of Byron's manhood was the England that, some seven years after the poet's death, looked on with approval and sympathy, whilst William the Fourth made his eldest natural son an Earl, and in other ways ennobled his other natural children, simply because they were his illegitimate issue. Is it not a fact that the England of seventy years since was an England, in which properties were notoriously passing, in every quarter of the country, out of the right line of descent through the confusion of progeny consequent on the prevalence of a particular kind of domestic immorality? Whilst libertinism was thus prevalent, why should Byron be pilloried and stoned for having been a rake?

And whilst Byron's England was so much more tolerant of libertinism, she was proportionately more intolerant of free thought in politics and religion than the England of to-day. In this period of virtuous homes, and Darwinism in the drawing-room of every one of them, it is amusing and instructive to observe in Moore's 'Life,' how dainty and mealy-mouthed and regretful the biographer becomes when he refers to Byron's

half-hearted scepticism, whilst a few pages later he speaks of the puerile dissoluteness of the poet's early manhood and the lighter profligacies of his Continental life, as though they were upon the whole to his credit. The fact is that, whilst making much hypocritical noise about the wickedness of their ways with women, society did not war against Byron and Shelley on account of their libertinism, but on account of their political and religious opinions. Had Byron voted with the Tories, treated the Prince Regent respectfully, and held his pen and tongue about matters touching the Thirty-nine Articles, England's higher society would never for a single instant have sided with Lady Byron in her domestic troubles. These facts must not be overlooked or forgotten by readers who would know the Real Lord Byron. To judge the great man fairly, one must remember the manners of his contemporaries.

# APPENDIX.

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## PART I.

LETTER FROM THE AUTHOR OF 'THE REAL LORD BYRON' TO THE EDITOR OF 'THE ATHENÆUM,' WITH HIS REPLY TO MR. FROUDE'S ARTICLE IN 'THE NINETEENTH CENTURY,' PUBLISHED IN NOS. 2914, 2917 (1 SEPT. AND 22 SEPT. 1883) OF THE ATHENÆUM.

JANE CLERMONT AND THE SHELLEYS.

(1) ON reading Mr. Froude's article touching my 'Real Lord Byron' in the August number of the 'Nineteenth Century,' I lost no time in asking Mr. Knowles for space in which to expose and correct the writer's singular misconceptions and numerous inaccuracies. With his usual courtesy Mr. Knowles consented to my request, and in a few days he was in possession of my reply, of which he wrote to me, on August 11th, 1883: 'I am sending on your MS. to Spottiswoode's to be put in type, and when I get it in proof will write to you finally about its insertion in the 'Nineteenth Century,' where in some form or other I think it has a claim to be.' After this expression of editorial judgment I was surprised to receive from Mr. Knowles a note, dated August 23rd, 1883, in which he expressed his regret that the length of my article (running, be it observed, to no more than eleven pages of the magazine) prevented him from seeing his way to publish it in its present form. As the questions raised by my 'Nineteenth Century' reviewer are questions that should not be regarded from only one side, I place in your hands the reply which, whilst admitting its claim to appear, Mr. Knowles declines to publish in the 'Nineteenth Century.'

JOHN CORDY JEAFFRESON.



## (2) THE OTHER SIDE OF MR. FROUDE'S 'LEAF FROM THE REAL LIFE OF BYRON.'

## I.

I HAVE too high a respect for Mr. Froude's character and literary achievements not to be troubled at finding myself an object of his disapprobation. My consolations under so considerable an annoyance are a consciousness of deserving his good opinion, and a confidence that I shall have it as soon as he sees he has done me injustice. It is needless to say that when Mr. Froude is wanting in fairness to any one his failing is referable to misinformation and misconception. It would ill become me to prefer or hint a charge of intentional injustice against a censor whose serious indictment of my biography of Byron is weakened in some of its principal counts by his obvious desire to avoid an overstatement of his case against me. In the same sentence in which he charges me with an ignoble motive, he admits that I had also a creditable object in calling attention to Byron's belief that Jane Clermont had given birth to a second child and committed it to a foundling hospital. Speaking of these imputations against the poor woman, whose fame has suffered alike from the neglect and the notice of biographers—the imputations which he is moved by antipathy to Byron rather than by concern for her to stigmatize as 'calumnies bred of spite and malignity'—Mr. Froude says, 'Forgotten they would have been, and need never have been revived out of oblivion, had not Mr. Jeaffreson desired to ornament his pages with sensational scandal, and to find a reason for the omission of Jane Clermont's name in Byron's will.' It will not take many words to show Mr. Froude that 'he is absolutely wrong,' if I may repeat against him his words against me, in thinking that the painful story remained in oblivion till the publication of my book, and that it would have been forgotten had I not found it to my interest to revive the buried calumnies. My book appeared at the opening of last May. In the review of 'Shelley and Mary' (the privately circulated 'Shelley Letters and Documents') that appeared in the last October 'Edinburgh Review' appears this piece of writing:—

'But in these conversations an unpleasant circumstance transpired. It is referred to in Mrs. Shelley's extracts from the same letter, and it was made the basis of calumnies against Shelley in the 'Literary Gazette.' Mr. Buxton Forman also notices it. It is, therefore, desirable that the facts should be stated. Lord Byron told Shelley that Elise, the Swiss nurse, who was sent to Venice by Mrs. Shelley in charge of Allegra, had persuaded the Hoppners of the truth of a most monstrous and incredible story, that Jane Clairmont was Shelley's mistress; that she had given birth to a child, whom Shelley had torn from her and sent to the Foundling Hospital; and that in consequence of this enormity the Hoppners had declined all further communication with the Shelleys, and advised Lord Byron to do the same.'

The 'Edinburgh' article which contained this passage and much more about the business was produced in the United States, without a word of reference to its source, in the series of articles entitled 'New Facts about Shelley,' that entertained the readers of the New

York 'Home Journal' in the December of last year. Hence it appears that the story which Mr. Froude accuses me of picking out of the grave—the story which, according to Mr. Froude, would have remained in oblivion had it not been for my reprehensible action—has for a series of years been a familiar matter to Shelleyan specialists, and was the whole world's familiar table-talk seven months before my book saw the light. The matter was noticed by so exemplary a Shelleyan as Mr. Buxton Forman. And yet no one would have heard of the matter had I not desired to give a piquant seasoning of sensational scandal to pages that saw the light for the first time so lately as the fifth month of the present year. Mr. Froude, who speaks so strenuously of my absolute wrongness, must admit himself 'absolutely wrong' in a principal feature of his article. Not that I would shift any responsibility from my own to another's shoulders, or that the writer of the 'Edinburgh' article is accountable in any degree for aught that appears in my book. Claire's letter (Egerton MSS. 2332, fol. 5), printed by Mr. Froude in the last number of the 'Nineteenth Century' together with Byron's note upon it, came for the first time under my notice in the summer of last year. Soon after I had copied the letter and the comment in the British Museum, I wrote to Shelley's best biographer, Mr. William Rossetti, telling him of the fact that had come to my knowledge through Byron's note on the angry epistle of his discarded mistress. In the following December, when I had written the portions of my book to which Mr. Froude calls particular attention, I saw in a number of the New York 'Home Journal' the passage which I have just transcribed from the 'Edinburgh Review;' but as the 'Home Journal' made no reference to the source of the 'New Facts about Shelley,' I mistook the appropriated matter for an original article by an American journalist. Months were still to pass before I heard that the 'Edinburgh' of the last October had contained an article on Shelley. Indeed, it was near the end of April, 1883, when my book was printed to the last line, that I heard of the essay in the 'Edinburgh.' It was a relief to me to discover that the article, adding nothing whatever to my knowledge of Claire and Byron, contained at least one serious error that would not have disfigured the article had the writer seen the note from Byron to Hoppner. These data show that I was not assisted in any degree, directly or indirectly, by the article which gave the world the monstrous story six months before it was again offered to readers in my pages. Enough of Mr. Froude's curious misconception that in respect to this matter I dragged from oblivion a story that, but for me, would have remained there. It is strange he should have been so quick to hurl at me the reproach so many critics of his treatment of the Carlyles and their manuscripts have lately thrown at him. It is strange he should have hurled it at a man of letters who has acted with a small minority in commending the editor of those MSS. for his courage and honesty.

On other matters Mr. Froude may be something less inaccurate, but is scarcely less mistaken. He maintains I am absolutely wrong in thinking the Shelleys went in 1816 to Geneva for the purpose of meeting Byron there. If I am wrong in this matter it remains for Mr. Froude to prove it. It also still remains for him to disprove my



assertion that Claire and Mary were living in mutual confidence and affection when they journeyed from London to the Sécheron hotel. This assertion is part of my statement of the circumstances which disposed me to think that the meeting of the two sets of tourists could not have been the mere accident which successive biographers have declared it. Whilst speaking of the force of these circumstances, I was careful to remark that I was without positive testimony of the conclusion to which they pointed. My words are:—

‘Though he has sought it with some pains, the writer of these pages has sought in vain for positive testimony that both parties started from England with the purpose of uniting in Switzerland. The circumstantial evidence, however, is overwhelming that the meeting was no mere accident. Still, the evidence is only circumstantial; and some uncertainty attends all conclusions from the inferential testimony of circumstances.’

It is admitted by my censor that instead of being ‘absolutely wrong’ I am absolutely right as to the point for which I was arguing; but the admission is made in a curious manner, so as to suggest that the main purpose and conclusion of my reasoning are nothing more than an incidental and subordinate feature of some piece of description. ‘There is,’ says Mr. Froude,

‘but one thing accurately stated in all that he says upon the subject that the meeting of the Shelleys with Byron at Geneva was not accidental.’

‘But one thing!’ Why, this one thing is the only thing for which I was for the moment arguing,—it is the conclusion to which I hoped to carry my readers by the testimony of circumstances. Never was the concession of the main matter in dispute made so ungraciously. It is a satisfaction, however, to have brought about a state of things in which a Shelleyan apologist is constrained to admit that, instead of being the mere accident which successive historians have stubbornly declared it, the meeting resulted from prearrangement in England between Byron and Claire.

But though this much has at length been conceded to the testimony of circumstances and common-sense, Mr. Froude is certain that neither Shelley nor Mary was in Claire’s confidence so far as to be aware of the arrangement she had made with Byron. Certain that I am mistaken in regarding Claire and Mary as fast friends in the spring and summer of 1816, certain that the two girls must have been at feud when Byron withdrew from England, because there had been tiffs and bickerings between them in the previous year, Mr. Froude is also assured that Shelley distrusted and disliked the girl who in the first month of the next year became Allegra’s mother. Speaking of Byron’s passage from England to Switzerland in 1816, Mr. Froude says:—

‘Jane Clermont knew where he was going, though the Shelleys did not; and Shelley having nothing at that time to keep him in England, and much to make him wish to leave it, Jane Clermont (I have it under her own hand, though I may not quote her words) *persuaded Shelley to go again to Geneva with Mary, and to take her with them.*’

According to Mr. Froude, Shelley and Mary Godwin suffered so much from Claire’s temper during their first Swiss trip and residence



that they determined henceforth to have as little as possible to do with her. On their return to England Claire caused them much distress by refusing to leave them when they wanted to be quit of her. Claire had shocked them by her sentiments on 'community of women,' and irritated them sorely in various ways. Mary distrusted and disliked her. Shelley distrusted and disliked her. Both he and Mary had found her an intolerable companion, and were in a state of active antagonism to her. Yet Claire *persuaded* Shelley to take her again to Switzerland, and persuaded Mary to take her for another continental journey. How did she thus persuade Shelley and Mary to do the very thing which of all things was most distasteful to them, and was certain to be fruitful of annoyance to them? By what arguments did she triumph over their repugnance to her in this remarkable manner? Mr. Froude has no answer for this question, but is certain Claire did not carry her point by taking the poet into her confidence respecting her intercourse with Byron. Mr. Froude is confident on this point because

'it happens that a letter of Jane Clermont survives in which she says that Mary Godwin had not the faintest suspicion of her intimacy with Byron, and that she had the utmost dread of her discovering it.'

After saying,

'Jane Clermont (I have it under her own hand, though I must not quote her words) persuaded Shelley to go again to Geneva with Mary, and to take her with them,'

Mr. Froude in his next sentence says:—

'It is perfectly certain, *therefore*, that the Shelleys had no expectation of meeting Byron on this occasion.'

It is not obvious *why* the Shelleys can have had no expectation of meeting Byron in Switzerland *because* they had no thought of going thither till Claire persuaded them to do so. The more reasonable inference from that much of the epistle's evidence and Claire's admitted knowledge of Byron's destination would be that she succeeded in persuading the Shelleys to take her to Geneva by telling them her reasons for wishing to journey thither. It is true the reader of Mr. Froude's article has already been assured, on the authority of the letter, that Mary Godwin 'had not the faintest suspicion of Claire's intimacy with Byron' during her journey to Geneva. But Mr. Froude does not tell the world that the epistle declares Shelley to have been in the same ignorance. Why, then, does Mr. Froude speak of both Shelleys being alike unaware of Claire's reasons for wishing to go to Geneva? If Mary was in the dark it does not follow that Shelley was also without light. Husbands often have secrets from their wives, and Shelley was quite capable of having a secret from the lady who became his second wife. If the epistle proves that Mary Godwin 'had not the faintest suspicion of Claire's intimacy with Byron' till the sojourn on the marge of Lake Lemman was near its last day, there is nothing in what Mr. Froude tells us of the letter to preclude the opinion that Shelley knew all about the matter when he started from England for Switzerland under cover of a falsehood.

But is the letter, of which Mr. Froude says so much and so little, satisfactory evidence that Mary was ignorant of Claire's familiarity with Byron? There are letters worthy of being rated as pieces of conclusive testimony, and there are letters that discredit their own statements, and even disprove the very allegations they were written to support. If the letter which my critic names without quoting its words was written by Claire *during* her stay at Geneva, and was, moreover, written under circumstances and in a style that would discountenance the suggestion that it was written with generous dishonesty, to relieve the writer's sister-by-affinity of the discredit coming to her from the incidents of the Genevese episode, I should be disposed to accept it at Mr. Froude's valuation. But if it was written some time after those incidents had passed into scandalous history, and contains internal evidence that it was composed as a screen to Mrs. Shelley's reputation, instead of regarding it as testimony to her alleged ignorance of the affair, I should be rather disposed to regard it as evidence of her knowledge of and connivance at the *liaison*. If the letter is a genuine and convincing epistle, how is it that Mr. Froude, holding Sir Percy Shelley's brief, has not been authorized to quote its words? If it would endure scrutiny, why is it withheld? Why are we merely told the substance of certain passages of the letter, without being allowed to see the form of those passages? Why has Mr. Froude forbore to give the date or the approximate date of the epistle? I have a right to ask these questions respecting the document which Mr. Froude has been instructed to use in this cautious and significantly uncommunicative manner to my discredit. That Claire with all her failings, was precisely the girl in her girlhood, precisely the woman in her later time, to write an untruthful letter for the advantage of her sister-by-affinity is not all that can be alleged to countenance a suspicion that the letter was written with a delusive purpose; that it is not one of those convincing letters which are effective as pieces of testimony because they cannot be suspected of having been written in order that they should be used as pieces of evidence. Though Mr. Froude forbears to quote the letter, I can adorn this article with five words of it—five words that would at least have figured appropriately in an epistle 'written to order' some time after the matters to which it referred. 'But already,' says the 'Edinburgh' reviewer, 'on May 6th, 1816, Jane Clairmont was at Paris on her way to join Lord Byron, and on May 13th she arrived at Geneva. 'Yielding,' as she says, 'to her pressing solicitations,' Shelley and Mary accompanied her. 'Yielding to my pressing solicitations,' &c. Writing to a friend from Geneva, in 1816, a mere letter of gossip, Claire would scarcely have used such words. In an epistle composed under pressure, for evidential ends, she could scarcely have failed to use them. It may also be presumed that Mr. Froude is indebted to the same letter for the particulars which he puts together in the following words:—

'During the four months which they [*i. e.* Claire and the Shelleys] and Byron spent at *Chamounix* [*sic*] she does not seem to have given them the slightest hint of the position in which she stood. Byron resided at a villa near the lake, the Shelleys at a cottage ten minutes' walk from it. They



met constantly, read together, went on the water together. English tourists *may have made impertinent remarks*, for it was known that the Shelleys were not married, and Byron was a world's wonder for imagined wickedness. But Shelley's diary remains to show how innocently they were occupied. Their studies were Curtius and Pliny, Tacitus and Plutarch. *If Claire ever visited Byron's house it was in Shelley's company.* Byron paid her no attentions which could attract suspicion; he was probably tired of her. *Nor could she easily have been alone with him, even for the shortest interval.'*

This although Mr. Froude prints the Egerton MSS. letter, with its reference to what passed between Byron and Claire as to what should be done with the child! Does Mr. Froude think Shelley was present when Byron and Claire came to an understanding on this subject? If so, he thinks less highly than I do of Shelley's delicacy. If he does not think so, what becomes of his assertion that Claire could not have been alone with Byron, 'even for the shortest interval'? I presume 'interval' is a misprint for 'interview.'

It is not easy to imagine anything beyond the credulity of those who can believe that the Shelleys were in antipathy to Claire when she prevailed upon them to accompany her to Geneva, and that she made them go with her to the very hotel where Byron had promised to meet her without making them the sharers of her secret. Like other Shelleyan apologists, Mr. Froude magnifies the tiffs and bickerings that disturbed Claire's intercourse with the Shelleys in the interval between the end of the first and the beginning of the second Swiss trip—tiffs and bickerings of which I knew all that Mr. Froude says, and much more, probably, than he can tell me, when I gave my account of the mutual confidence and sympathy of the two girls. Like younger children, maidens in their teens make up their quarrels, and, kissing one another, return to the love that preceded their transient dissensions. There is nothing in the notes to which Mr. Froude calls attention to sustain an opinion that the quarrels of these two girls differed from the passing quarrels of other girls. There had been friction between them during the first trip, which even Mr. Froude admits to have begun when they loved one another. There is no evidence that the Shelleys were greatly shocked by Claire's wild talk about 'community of women.' Had it offended Shelley, as such talk would nowadays be sure to offend a young man of his sensibility and refinement, he would not so readily have consented to have taken her for another run to Switzerland with her sister-by-affinity. Had the wild talk offended Mary as much as Mr. Froude would have us imagine, she would have broken with the talker for ever. That Mary's passing distaste for Jane was due to jealousy in respect to Shelley, and that Shelley's uneasiness with Claire was due to the fervour of her regard for him, no one can question who has considered the published evidences of their action towards one another. Putting an end at the same moment to Mary's jealousy on the one hand and Shelley's apprehension of embarrassment on the other, Byron's passion was just the incident to restore the girls to the old mutual cordiality, and to make the trio the same happy lot of young people they were in the summer of 1814. In saying that I insult Shelley by suggesting that he took sympathetic



cognizance of Byron's passion for Claire *after* Claire had yielded to it, Mr. Froude sets the evidence of facts at defiance. If Claire's position in respect to Byron differed from Mary's position in respect to Shelley, the difference resulted wholly from the moral diversity of the two men—a fact to which due prominence was given in my pages; and this difference would have been quite as great had each of the girls been her poet's wedded wife. Will Shelley's apologists persist for ever in handling his story as though, apart from his genius and mental eccentricities, he resembled closely the young Englishmen of the present time, who, moving in the ways of the gentle life, are chiefly remarkable for simplicity, unselfishness, and moral orderliness? Just as Byron's immorality must be regarded with reference to the prevailing profligacy of his period, the same general dissoluteness must be borne in mind when an estimate is made of Shelley's moral condition. He tolerated things that in these days would revolt him and stir him to disgust. Several of the admitted and indisputable facts of his life show that my view of his attitude towards Byron and Claire at Geneva does him no wrong in respect to his moral sensibility and delicacy. I know no more than the rest of the world respecting the circumstances that determined him to leave his wife and go to the woman who was not his wife. But I am disposed to think the considerations which decided his course in this matter are fairly indicated by his words to a friend who had his confidence:—

'Every one who knows me must know that the partner of my life should be one who can feel poetry and understand philosophy; *Harriett is a noble animal*, but she can do neither.'

Anyhow, it is certain that he left this 'noble animal' without having had any overpoweringly bitter quarrel with her, and went to Switzerland in the summer of 1814 with the woman whom he loved till his death. It is also certain that on his way to Switzerland he wrote in terms of cordial affection to the wife from whom he had fled, urging her to come to him in Switzerland and be happy in the society of himself and his mistress. What would be thought nowadays of the man who, living with a ringless bride, should make such a proposal to the woman on whose hand he had put the bridal ring? Surely Mr. Froude has not right on his side when he insists that the man who could do this thing could not, by reason of his delicacy and purity, have endured the thought of seeing his own mistress's sister-by-affinity become Byron's mistress. To show how he accepted so readily and hopefully this prospect for Claire's happiness, I call attention to his ignorance of Byron's besetting infirmities. 'If so,' Mr. Froude exclaims, disdainfully, 'he was the only person in England that was ignorant.' Is it not, however, a fact that after living for years in intimacy with Byron, Shelley failed to realize the incurable nature of his friend's libertinism? Is it not a fact that, though he had occasion to study the worst aspects of this libertinism, he was never profoundly shocked by it? Byron's treatment of Claire made no difference in Shelley's liking for him and admiration of him. Shelley knew Byron during his Venetian excesses without ceasing to honour and even to worship him. When he had for some

two years been living with another man's wife, Byron was commended for his steady growth in virtue by the poet, who wrote to John Gisborne, in January, 1822: 'What think you of Lord Byron now? Space wondered less at the swift and fair creations of God, when he grew weary of vacancy, than I at this spirit of an angel in the mortal paradise of a decaying body. So I think, let the world envy while it admires, as it may.' As he could write in this strain of the poet who wrecked his constitution with the Venetian debaucheries, it is not surprising that Shelley had no disposition to pity Claire for being the chosen companion of so angelic a being in the days of his finer beauty and unimpaired graces.

And now for a parting word on Mr. Froude's strictures on my way of dealing with the story which, making Claire the mother of a second child, represented that Shelley was the infant's father, and that Claire had committed it to a foundling hospital. Mr. Froude is of opinion that I ought not to have repeated this story; my answer is that to have omitted the story from my portraiture of 'The Real Lord Byron' would have been to shrink from the perfect accomplishment of my undertaking. To give a perfect and sternly veracious picture of Byron it was needful for me to call attention to the story. I have already shown that in dealing with that matter I did not draw a repulsive scandal from oblivion, but only spoke of an affair that was the talk of every London dinner-table and a piece of gossip in every American city for months previous to the appearance of my book. Mr. Froude says I was wrong to accept part of that story as true. My answer is that *I accepted no part of it as true*. On the contrary, whilst declaring the absolute falseness of the part of the story that affected Shelley's character—the only part of the story which at the time of writing I was entitled by sufficient evidence to brand as baseless calumny—I was careful to state that there was no proof that *any part* of the story was true. Here are my words:—

'At this time Byron and Hoppner believed that Claire had become the mother of another child, whom she had put into some Italian foundling hospital for nurture during its infancy. Hoppner, who as the Britannic Consul-General at Venice may have had better evidence than a maid-servant's tattle respecting the matter, was certain that Claire had given birth to a second child, and provided in that manner for its sustenance. The Consul-General's information (*which may have been false in every particular*) was imparted to Byron, and they were both under the impression Shelley was the infant's father. On this last point they were certainly mistaken.'

Thus Mr. Froude charges me with accepting part of the story as true, though I am careful to say that, for any evidence I have to the contrary, every particular of the story may have been false. When my book went to the press there was no evidence to justify me in saying more to the discredit of the charges against Claire. A very strange matter about this business is that, whilst indignantly repudiating as a monstrous and indescribably nauseous slander the imputation of tearing the child from its mother's breast and sending it to the foundling hospital, Shelley denies the charge of having had Claire for his mistress in words which reveal his opinion that, had he been guilty of so flagrant an enormity of domestic uncleanness, he



would have been guilty of nothing worse than 'a great error.' His words are:—

'As to what reviews and the world say I do not care a jot; but when persons who have known me are capable of conceiving of me, *not that I have fallen into a great error—as would have been the living with Claire as my mistress*—but that I have committed such unutterable crimes as destroying or abandoning a child, and that my own! imagine my despair of good!'

All that I accept as true in this miserable business is the declaration of Hoppner and Byron that they believed the story. Assuming, as I was bound to do, and am still bound to do, that Byron persisted in believing the part of the story which touched Claire *after* he was satisfied of the falseness of the part of the story that touched Shelley, I mention this *belief* as something to be remembered by those who would account for 'his neglect of the mother at the time of the child's [Allegra's] death, and his omission to make any provision in his will for the needy woman he had injured grievously.'

What does Mr. Froude say of me when I have declared the falseness of the greater and worse part of the story, and have declared that the whole may be false in every particular? He positively maintains that I declare my belief in one part of the story *because* I think it probable that Byron believed it. 'The belief,' says Mr. Froude—and I beg every reader to pay particular attention to my assailant's words—'is alleged as an explanation of conduct which would otherwise have been *indefensible*.' This is not a fair statement of the case. The belief is alleged as a possible explanation of conduct which would otherwise lie, in my opinion, beyond the reach of excuse and apology of every kind. 'Therefore,' Mr. Froude continues, 'Mr. Jeaffreson assumes there was real ground for it, since a belief taken up without ground would be no defence at all.' It is thus that Mr. Froude forces upon me a word that I do not use, and then infers from the word that I mean something which no man of average intelligence could mean. Surely it cannot be needful for me to explain to Mr. Froude that our opinion of the doer of evil and vindictive acts is rightly affected by a knowledge that the bad and malicious deeds are referable to their doer's honest misconception. Let me make Mr. Froude an example for his own instruction. By force of several curious and extravagant misconceptions he has written unjust and absolutely wrong things of me. But for my knowledge of those misconceptions, and of the way in which such misapprehensions affect certain kinds of persons, I should rate him as one of a class of writers to which he certainly does not belong. My confidence in his sincerity and his truthfulness of purpose forbids me to accuse him of aught worse than haste and inaccuracy. He has written wrongly and unjustly of me; but my clear perception of his misconceptions forbids me to have a doubt of his honesty and justice of intention. I have now met Mr. Froude on all the points of his article. I have shown him to be in error on all the matters in dispute. With respect to the allegations he made not merely to my literary discredit, but to my personal dishonour, I have shown him to be 'totally and absolutely wrong.' He has been



guilty of a serious misdemeanour in writing so precipitately. Before he essayed to put a dark blot on my fame he should have made himself sure of his facts. He says that I must 'take the consequences' of deviating from the account of those successive biographers who declare that the meeting of the two parties of tourists in Geneva was accidental. I am quite content to take the consequences of having driven Mr. Froude to confess that on this important point historic truth is with me, and historic error with the scribes whom he thinks I should have followed meekly and trusted blindly. Mr. Froude also must take the consequences of his rash writing. I am confident that he will withdraw his wrong statements and in fit terms express his regret for having made them. Should he persist in them, instead of being mere mistakes those of his wrong statements which touch my honour will become calumnies.

JOHN CORDY JEAFFRESON.

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## PART II.

BYRONIC EVIDENCES PUBLISHED IN 'THE ATHENÆUM' ON 4TH AUGUST AND 18TH AUGUST, 1883.

### BYRON LETTERS.

(3) As the interest always felt in Lord Byron's life has been much increased by recent publications, we print to-day a series of letters, which throw new light on various portions of his career, and on Lady Byron's relations to him and Mrs Leigh. We think that the time has come when the scandalous legends that have sullied the fair fame of the poet, his wife, and his sister should be finally dissipated; and in the belief that no one can rise from the perusal of these letters without feeling that the stories long current are baseless, we print the correspondence that follows. The opening set of letters passed between Lady Byron and Mrs. Leigh, and extend from the time of their first acquaintance till Lady Byron's separation from her husband; next comes a letter from Lady Byron to her husband, written after she had left him; and then Lord Byron's final letter to her. This is followed by two letters addressed by Mrs. Leigh to Mr. Wilmot Horton during the period when the separation between Lord Byron and his wife was imminent. These are followed by letters addressed by Lady Byron to the Hon. Mrs. G. Lamb, containing remarks on her husband's character and on Lord Melbourne. Next come the letters that passed between Lady Byron and her sister-in-law regarding the appointment of a trustee for the latter. The concluding letters are those which passed between Lady Byron and Mrs. Leigh before and after their interview at Reigate in 1851. Some of these letters are preserved at the

British Museum, and of them a few were printed four years ago by Mr. E. M. Thompson, the Keeper of the Manuscripts; but the most important are not in the Museum, and have not been published before.

*Miss Milbanke to Mrs. Leigh.*

Seaham, October 16 [1814].

(4) MY DEAR MADAM,—At the time when I had the gratification of receiving your very kind message I would not obtrude an acknowledgement, and I have since delayed it in hopes of making my letter more welcome by the information of your Nephew's arrival. As *that* is still deferred, will you now permit me to express my sincerest thanks for your favorable dispositions towards me? I am happy to avail myself of a double claim to your acquaintance. One I need not name, and cannot name with as much gratitude as I feel it,—the other is our mutual friend Miss Doyle,—through whom I have the pleasure of knowing you already so well that I wish very much to know you better. It is a wish which I hope you will be willing to indulge when I have the happiness of being your relation. I had a letter from Miss Doyle to-day, and you may be glad to know that she was well and in good spirits when it was written. She most kindly and confidently enters into my present views and feelings—indeed all those whose judgment is most to be valued must congratulate me truly on this occasion. I will not longer trouble you, but allow me to remain, with great regard and every kind wish,

Yours most sincerely,

A. I. MILBANKE.

*Lady Byron to Mrs. Leigh.*

Tuesday Evening [August, 1815].

(5) DEAREST LEI,—I must tell you how lovingly B. has been talking of 'dear Goose,' till he had half a mind to cry—and so had I. The conversation arose from his telling the contents of a Will that he has just made—as far as I can judge, quite what he ought to make—and though *you* could never derive any pleasure from the possession of what he might *leave*, you should have satisfaction in knowing that your children will afterwards have a provision, besides what may afterwards devolve to them. The nature of this Will is such as to exclude a change from any future contingencies of family, &c.—and it appears to me very judicious. To tell you these circumstances cannot, I know, please you in any other way than as affording you a proof of his consideration for you, even when most oppressed by his own difficulties. And, dearest Augusta, believe that I know you too well to suppose what a certain person might suppose, or anything of the kind. By-the-bye, I believe she is affronted with me. Knowing that I did not voluntarily give cause I shall not break my heart. She has never called on me, and when I made her a Vis—with my Mother, was very dignified. I never told you of it, nor of my meeting with Mrs. Musters there. She asked after B.? Such a wicked-looking cat I never saw. Somebody else looked quite virtuous by the side of her. O that I were out of this horrid town, which makes me mad! The moving will be a sad business! You know I am not apt to fancy about my own salvation, but I really do feel a conviction that my health will be much injured by a continuance here. If I were in the country I believe I could regain my *good looks* (if I was ever blest with any) and my good spirits wonderfully.

Did I tell you that B. has asked Moore and his wife to Seaham? I am very glad.

B. has said something that has gratified me much, as it showed consideration for my Mam. He said he meant to have her at Seaham (not that I should like it) during my Accouchement, because she would be so anxious at a distance. I am as apt to fancy that the sort of things which please me are to be traced more or less to you, as that those which pain me come from another quarter,—and I always feel as if I had more *reasons* to love you than I can exactly know. But reasons are not necessary to make me do so, as I cannot say that you owe much to my sense of *Duty* in that point.

A thing that has annoyed me since has not effaced the more pleasurable impression. This is his intention of visiting La Tante to-morrow. I do not like the inclination to go to her. Do you really think it will diminish? Whilst it exists I must in some degree suffer. I shall be much engaged in the morning, therefore do not be surprised if I cannot add any thing to this in answer to the letter I hope to receive from you to-morrow.

[Neither signed nor dated, this letter has this endorsement, in the handwriting of—: ‘Will. This letter was rec<sup>d</sup> by Mrs. Leigh from Anne Isabella Lady Byron in 1815 (the will alluded to was signed July 29, 1815). Mrs. L. was at Six Mile Bottom, n<sup>r</sup> Newmarket. I. L<sup>r</sup> B., 13, Piccadilly Terrace. A. L.’]

Jan. 16, 1816, Kirkby.

(6) MY DEAREST LEI,—I am safe here—and have your letter. I hope Le Mann will write me his opinion after this interview, which must have rendered it more decided. He is right in not seeing H.

I have made the most explicit statement to my father and mother, and nothing can exceed their tender anxiety to do every thing for the sufferer. She is quite composed, though deeply affected, and able to use her judgment, which certainly is excellent when not impaired by too great indulgence of feeling. She has relieved my mind about the foreign scheme by a mode of prevention that appears likely to be effectual against any practice of H.’s, viz., that if requisite my father and Capt. B. should wait upon him, and state as their joint opinion that it would be a measure most injurious to B., after which H. dare not promote it, for his own character’s sake. My father and mother agree that in every point of view it would be best for B. to come here. They say he shall be considered in everything, and that it will be impossible for him to offend or disconcert them after the knowledge of this unhappy cause. I assure you that my mother could not be more affectionate towards her own son. Has Le Mann advised the Country? It will be by means of the *heir* that it can be affected, and you will be able to touch that subject skilfully before you go, and give G. B. a hint of it, if you can. My dearest A., it is my great comfort that you are in Piccadilly. Don’t restrain your communications from the idea of my Mother’s inspection, for I only read passages. Tell me exactly how B. is affected by my absence. I conceive that in his morbid state of feeling he has no desire for the absent, and may feel relieved for a time, as Le Mann expected. Make him to write to me, if you can, because any manual exertion is good for him, since his active habits decrease with the progress of Disease,—and to employ the powers externally diminishes the mental irritability.

On the whole I am satisfied to have come here. I am sure it was right—and must tend to the advantage of all. I am very well. I shall hope to get another letter from you before the Post goes out. My Mother suggests



what would be more expedient about the Laudanum bottle than taking away. To fill it with three quarters of water, which won't make any observable difference, or if it should, the brown might be easily made deeper coloured.

I am obliged to send this in haste, but *may* be able to write again by this post.

A. I. M. B.

Kirkby : Tuesday [Jan. 17, 1816].

(7) MY DEAREST A.,—I arrived here last night, and was not disappointed by you. You cannot know the feeling with which I receive every mark of your affection, because you will not allow, what I shall always feel, that I have much to repair in my conduct towards you, for having ever pained you by mistrusting your kindness after such an experience of it. No : if all the World had told me you were doing me an injury, I *ought not* to have believed it. My chief feeling, therefore, in relation to you and myself must be that I have wronged you, and that you have never wronged me. You will wish to contradict this, but my impression is not to be changed, so it is useless to say more of it than that it makes me feel I have no *claim* to what you give.

My looks have disappointed my mother. But *you* have little to answer for in regard to them. My mind is altogether so overstrained and my body so weak in comparison, that if it were not one thing, it would be another. I think much worse of my prospects of health than I usually avow. When I tell you that there are seldom two hours in the day when my head is not burning, you will conceive there must be a perpetual waste of constitution. I sometimes feel as if this would not go on long, but it is not one of the subjects of my anxiety,—at least when it does not make others anxious :—and, dearest A., do not wish anything for me, except that I may fulfil my duties whilst I am amongst them—and render me more thankful in performing them by the comfort of being dear to one who feels for me as you do.

[No date to this letter but 'Kirkby : Tuesday,' the date 'Jan. 16, 1816,' in pencil, having been put in at the British Museum, where this letter is preserved.]

K. M., Jan. 18, 1816.

(8) MY OWN DEAREST LEI,—You will think my silence very strange, but you know not how I am bewildered, and afraid of writing just the reverse of what I mean. It seems the Malady is by no means more confirmed, and I conceive that it does not exist more strongly than at many former periods. This is melancholy for those to whom he is dear, for it does not render the case more hopeful, though it suspends the melancholy termination.

Do you remember he said I was to nurse till February 10th ? I think it is his intention about that time to join me *pour des raisons*, and to go abroad as soon as there is a probability of having attained the object in view. I think that if conscious of the Disease he may have a design in admitting Le Mann, before whom he is able to controul himself, and thinks he will bear witness to his Sanity. The fact of the Pistol is striking. Such apprehensions are on the *very verge* of derangement, and there is but little difference between such an intention and its execution.

I am rather glad of my Mother's going to town. Anything is better for the anxious than to be stationary. I hope she will be as kind and reasonable with you as she has been with me. If she should be otherwise, you will know that it is more from her state of health than from any want of heart. Having placed myself at present under the protection of my parents, it is, of course, my duty to allow them to take such measures as

they deem requisite for my welfare, provided they are not such as can injure others. My father is urgent that I should have some confidential advice, which I believe my mother will be able to procure. Knowing your anxiety for me, I do not withhold the knowledge of this intention.

The child is well, but you will hear of it from him. God bless you.

I enclose two letters; one you will send *if you approve*. I meant first to send it from hence, which will account for the beginning.

I also write a few lines if you should wish to have a note for B's inspection. I am anxious to hear of G. B.'s success. Ever Thine, A. I. M. B.

To the Hon. Mrs. Leigh,  
13, Piccadilly Terrace.

[At this time Lady Byron sometimes signed A. I. M. B. but usually A. I. B.]

Kirkby Mallory.

(9) I have had worse than my usual waking to-day, Augusta. I am not fit to have the management of myself nor to be left alone. But Heaven will take care of me. I have not deserved to lose its protection. And perhaps all this must have been its mercy.

I have been endeavouring to work off some of my agonies, and have addressed them to B. in the enclosed, which I wish you to read attentively..... God bless you and him.

The child is very well, and begins to notice. [Tell B. (if you think fit) that I am unwell, but not seriously :—*words erased*.]..... No, I won't send the enclosed to-day.

[Neither signed nor dated.]

Kirkby, Jan. 19, 1816.

(10) DEAREST GUS,—I was in a state of I know not what yesterday, and could not write to you, nor shall I say much to-day. But you will want to know how I am. Well enough as the World goes, and I mean to break my neck upon my old horse, which is here. I am waiting with some anxiety for the day's post, and really cannot say more. Pray forgive my taciturnity, which may come soon to the same degree as B.'s. Let me hear of his health.

Ever Thine, A. I. B.

Jan. 23, 1816.

(11) DEAREST A.,—I know you feel for me as I do for you, and perhaps I am better understood than you think. You have been ever since I knew you my best comforter, and will so remain, unless you grow tired of the office, which may well be. You cannot think how severe my father is—much more than my mother. The facts you last relate tend very much to the point I wish to have established. It is impossible for a true friend not to wish it.

Rushton's coming is quite unnecessary, and makes me a little suspicious. I shall take care what I say to him, if he comes; but if he has not set off, he had better be prevented, for William has nothing to do.

I enclose the Ticket..... Lucky I have not lost it. Have you ever acquainted Harrison that Le M. had not, on further investigation, found any cause to be alarmed for B.'s health?—as I do not understand the affection of the liver to be at all dangerous.

Your God-daughter is very well indeed, and almost makes me laugh with her laughter. Her temper is serene as possible. You have never mentioned Georgie but once, nor told me how her brains are

Ever Thine, A. I. B.



Jan. 25, 1816.

(12) I am better, dearest A., and do not fear for my peace and preservation. You and G. B. shall have the earliest knowledge of the measures which I may positively resolve to take, unless you would rather be ignorant, on account of the embarrassment which questions might occasion before they could be truly answered. At present the less suspicion there is the better. Above all let H——n remain in ignorance. An opinion of great weight which I have just heard alarms me a little about him. But 'we must tell truth and shame the Devil,' in a lawyer's wig as well as any other dress.

'The thunder' to which you allude would not be so terrible. If it be disease, any strong shock will for a time restore reason, though in the end it can make no difference, and as far as a boundless and impious pride may be combined with it, reverses and humiliations would be mercies. Indulgence and success are more injurious than anything.....I have neither forgotten considerations of *justice* or charity—and for the latter I have done much since I saw you. My own mind has been more shaken than I thought, and is sometimes in a useless state for hours. You are indeed kind and wise in giving me all details. I might have guessed them pretty nearly, but it is better to know. I cannot regret the report of derangement.

I galloped yesterday like Lady C. L., and felt something like pleasure whilst I was in danger of fracturing my scone. But I must not forget my Mamaship. The bairn is as well as possible.

Ever, dearest, thine,

A. I. B.

Jan. 25 [1816].

(13) MY DEAREST AUGUSTA,—Shall I still be your sister? I [have resigned, *erased*] must resign my right to be so considered. But I don't think that will make any difference in the kindness I have so uniformly experienced from you. I follow my Duty, and look to that peace which it alone can ensure—here or hereafter. It would have been deception and inconsistency in me to give *advice* or *opinion* to B. I have written to you the few lines in the envelope to be shown if you please. I am sorry, very sorry, to have occasioned you or other friends more than necessary uneasiness by the weakness of my mind during that struggle which is now past. I will not renew your anxiety in the same way. I have not heard from my mother to-day. Yesterday she wrote of you most kindly, and with the fullest sense of what you have been to me. I fear her nerves will not keep quiet much longer. If she should quarrel with you, think of it but as the misery of the moment. I know she will ever feel grateful to you *in her heart*. And it is one of the best, in spite of an irritable temper.

It is often a great comfort to me to think that the approaching event will not be felt severely. Certainly the heart will not suffer. So far from wishing to be the source of regrets, it would grieve most to think that I should be a loss. The dispositions are so anti-domestic that I hope to be remembered only as a burden. Feelings must not now be indulged; but whenever I feel at all, it will be as kindly as you could. *Independent of malady*, I do not think of the past with any spirit of resentment and scarcely with a sense of injury. God bless him.

P.S.—You must not let B. know the contents of this, as it would be disadvantageous before my father's letter.

Jan. 28.

(14) MY DEAREST AUGUSTA,—Hereafter you shall hear from me more. I hope you are not going to leave London just yet. I am not ill.

Yours ever,

A. I. B.



I meant to enclose—I forget what. I suppose my Mother will return to-night.

Kirkby, Feb. 14, 1816.

(15) MY DEAREST A.,—I won't enter into explanations, but the reasons for my second letter were *meant* to be the kindest.

Now in answer to yours. Happiness no longer enters into my view. It can never be restored, and the greater or less degree of misery I must endure will depend on the *principles* of my conduct, not on its consequences. Now, independent of any advice whatever, I deem it my duty to God to act as I am acting, and I am resigned to the misfortunes that may flow from that source, since by any other course I should forfeit my peace of conscience—the only good that remains to me. No temporal advantages or privations will have the least weight. In regard to him, it is my decided opinion there will be no fatal event, and I think it a great error to regard 'worldly disgrace' as a serious evil compared to some that must ensue with his character from worldly prosperity. If Pride be not expiated on earth, but indulged, who may dare to look beyond it? The lessons of Adversity may be most beneficial when they are most bitter. Not that I would voluntarily be the means of Chastisement, but I seem to have been made so, and am doomed to participate in the suffering.

His grief and despair, which I do not doubt are of the same too worldly nature, the loss of character by the anticipation of a measure which he had long intended, only with advantages of which he is deprived in this case, touches him most sensibly. It is not for *me*, but for the accompanying circumstances, that he feels so deeply. All this it is in his disposition to revenge on the object, if in his power. When his revenge avowedly began as soon as I became so by marriage, and seems to have increased in force rather than diminished, what would it be now? Those who consider *his* welfare ought not to desire my return. There is nothing of which I am more certain.

The present sufferings of all may yet be repaid in blessings. Don't despair absolutely. Travel and leave me but enough of your interest to afford you any by partaking that sorr... which I am most unhappy to cause even thus unintentionally. You will be of my opinion hereafter, and at present your bitterest reproach would be forgiven, though Heaven knows you have considered me more than one in a thousand would have done—more than anything but my affection for one most dear to you could deserve. I must not remember these feelings.—Farewell.—God bless you—from the bottom of my heart.

A. I. B.

This letter has not been seen, though sent circuitously, as I thought it better it should not be received by post.

To the Hon. Mrs. Leigh,  
13, Piccadilly Terrace, London.

Kirkby: Feb. 19, 1816.

(16) MY DEAREST A.,—I have received your very painful letter, and am truly sorry that you should be so much alarmed, though I think without a cause. On the mysterious subject of which I am ignorant, I can only say that, if the report allude to anything I know to be false, I will bear testimony to its falsehood.

With the history of the letter I was before acquainted, and, having guessed the author, had written to impose silence as to whatever might have been collected from servants or observation during the visit here. The [blotted out] has been acknowledged [erasure]. You do not know the person. I am stopped by the post.

Yours ever, A. I. B.

Kirkby: Feb. 20 [post-mark: Feb. 22, 1816].

(17) I will take a moment's opportunity, dearest A., to say I am better, and the child quite well. Much more love. Ever yours, A. I. B.

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*Lady Byron to Lord Byron.*

(18) On reconsidering your last letter to me, and your second to my father, I find some allusions which I will not leave to be answered by others, because the explanation may be less disagreeable to you from myself.

My letters of January 15th and 16th—It can be fully and clearly proved that I left your house under the persuasion of your having a complaint of so dangerous a nature that any agitation might bring on a fatal crisis. My entreaties before I quitted you that you would take medical advice, repeated in my letter of January 15th, must convince you of such an impression on my mind. My absence, if it had not been rendered necessary by other causes, was medically recommended on that ground, as removing an object of Irritation. I should have acted inconsistently with my unchanged affection for you, or indeed with the common principles of humanity, by urging my wrongs at that moment. From subsequent accounts I found that these particular apprehensions which I, and others, had entertained, were groundless. Till they were ascertained to be so, it was my intention to induce you to come to this place, where, at every hazard, I would have devoted myself to the alleviation of *your* sufferings, and should not then have reminded you of *my own*, as believing you, from physical causes, not to be *accountable* for them. My parents, under the same impression communicated by me, felt the kindest anxiety to promote my wishes and your recovery, by receiving you here. Of all this my letter of January 16th is a testimony. If for these reasons (to which others were perhaps added) I did not remonstrate at the time of leaving your house, you cannot forget that I had before warned you, earnestly and affectionately, of the unhappy and irreparable consequences which must ensue from your conduct, both to yourself and me—that to those representations you had replied by a determination to be wicked, though it should break my heart.

What then had I to expect? I cannot attribute your 'State of mind' to any cause so much as to the *total* dereliction of principle, which *since* our marriage you have professed and gloried in. Your acknowledgements have not been accompanied by any intentions of amendment.

I have *consistently* fulfilled my duty as your wife. It was too dear to be resigned till it became hopeless. Now my resolution cannot be changed.

A. I. BYRON.

Kirkby, Feb. 23, 1816.

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*Lord Byron to his Wife: his last letter to her on leaving England in 1816.*

(19) More last words—not many—but such as you will attend to. I have no reason to expect an answer, neither does it import, but you will at least hear me. I have just parted from Augusta, almost the last being whom you have left me to part with. Wherever I go, and I am going far, you and I can never meet in this world, nor in the next. Let this content or atone. If any accident occurs to me, be kind to Augusta; if she is then also nothing, then to her children. You know that some time ago I made

a will in favor of her and her children, because any child of ours was provided for by other and better means. This could not be prejudice to you, for we had not then differed, and even now is useless during your life by the terms of our settlement. Therefore be kind to her, for she has never spoken nor acted towards you but as your friend.....And recollect that, though it may be an advantage to you to have lost a husband, it is sorrow to her to have the water now and the earth hereafter between her and her brother. It may occur to your memory that you formerly promised me thus much. I repeat it, for deep resentments have but half recollections. Do not deem this promise cancelled, for it was not a vow. I have received from Mr. Wharton a letter containing one question and two pieces of intelligence. The carriage is yours; and as it only carried us to Halmaby and London, and you to Kirkby, I hope it will yet convey you many a more propitious journey. The receipts may remain unless you find them troublesome. If so, let them be forwarded to Augusta, through whom I would also receive occasional accounts of my child. My address will be left with Mrs. Leigh. The ring is of no lapidary value, but it contains the hair of a king and an ancestor, and I wish it to be preserved to Miss Byron. With regard to a subsequent letter from Mr. Wharton, I have to observe that it is the law's delay, not mine, and when the tenor of the bond is settled return him and Mr. H. I am ready to sign.

Yours truly,

BYRON.

[No date.]

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*Mrs. Leigh to Mr. Horton.*

[February] Thursday, 5 o'clock.

(20) DEAR MR. H.,—I've not time to say more than a few words to-day, but you shall hear more from me to-morrow. Your definite refusal is sent this morning to Lady B. Yesterday Captain B. was summoned to Mrs. Clermont. It appears to me they either wish to *frighten* or coax B. into an amicable arrangement. From what passed, however, *now* if they chose it, it must come into court! God alone knows the consequences. I think all you do of poor lady B.—and, alas! of my dearest B. He is much the same as when I last wrote. This is all I have time for to-day. God bless you, dear Mr. H.

Saturday.

(21) DEAR MR. H.,—I have heard no more, but believe Lady B. is in Town. B. heard last night from Dr. Holland to this effect, that he had been requested by Dr. Lushington, a particular friend of his, to hear him and see B. You recollect, I dare say, that he is the legal adviser on the other side. Dr. H. very properly asked B.'s will and pleasure before he consented. Permission being granted, Dr. H. is now here, and it will be too late to tell you the result. *Post hour* as usual, and no time to say more, except that I agree in all you said in your letter. It strikes me that if their pecuniary proposals are favourable he will be too happy to escape the exposure. He must be anxious, dear Mr. H. It is impossible he should not in some degree. I have no more to say. Ever yours, A. L.

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*Lady Byron to the Hon. Mrs. G. Lamb.*

Leamington: Nov. 11th [1818].

(22) Your letter, my dear Mrs. Lamb, was delayed on its way to me by my absence from Kirkby. The death of Sir S. Romilly had indeed made a



deep impression upon my feelings. I was indebted to him for the most friendly wishes, and possess a written testimony of his opinion respecting my claims to the guardianship of my child. But whatever support I might have derived from him under any future difficulties, I can hardly contemplate this contingent personal loss when I reflect on the immediate and calamitous consequences of the event to others—to the country.

There has been of late a cessation of open hostilities on Lord Byron's part, but I have some reason to suppose that he has been meditating a mode of attack, for which, however, it is doubtful in my opinion if he will have sufficient courage or temerity. The hint of it was given in Beppo. I feel there is power in Truth to rouse up friends even among strangers. But I would wish that Truth to remain like a sword within the sheath. My child is in every respect a comfort to me. She is healthy, intelligent and kind-hearted. I think I shall go to London and its vicinity for two or three weeks early in the next year, but shall not take Ada if I do, as the attention which she requires, particularly amongst strangers, would interfere with the object of my journey, to enjoy the society of my friends. Yet it will not be without a struggle that I shall relinquish the daily duties supplied by her opening character. I have found an attendant for her in whom I can place great confidence.

Our correspondence is not frequent, but judging from the evidence of my own feelings towards you, without any other proof, I should feel sure that what concerned my happiness would always interest you.

Believe me, dearest Mrs. Lamb,

Yours most affectionately,

A. I. BYRON.

I have forgotten to say that I am stronger—at least hoping to become well in time.

Hampstead : Aug. 26 [1824].

(23) MY DEAR MRS. LAMB,—I have been wishing for some time past to write to you. Yet there are many points on which I am persuaded that without communication you will have felt for me and with me. To these it is easier to advert in conversation than by letter. I may at least say what, as my friend, you will be glad to learn, that no part of my strange and melancholy experience has left the slightest tinge of bitterness on my mind. To have seen the utter fruitlessness of an attachment to which all was sacrificed must indeed remain a source of sorrow, but in so decided a case death could hardly be said to extinguish a hope long before crushed. It is not to vain remembrances, but to the living, that my remaining powers are due, and I have a kind and open feeling for all with whom I am concerned or connected, even for some who might have acted a more just and friendly part towards me. For I attribute their conduct (according to their different circumstances) either to the illiberal prejudices of their peculiar circle, or to some private reasons for not daring to manifest their sentiments; so that I am very far from feeling as if any unkindness were designed to me, insignificant as the opinions of persons under such influences must become in my eyes.

I had a visit not long ago from Lady Westmoreland—evidently very kindly meant—but her views and mine differ. She wants to oppose the transient excitement produced by artful management on the state of opinion, and I to let it subside unobserved. Of course I shall pursue my own plan, and she may fight with unsubstantial adversaries, for as such I regard the party feelings of the moment. *You* well know who has really done more for the reputation of the deceased than all the partisans

united, and from that reflection I find the most satisfactory feelings. But Lady W., not being aware of these parts of my conduct, may naturally wonder that I should not be more anxious for the corroboration of public opinion.

I assure you, my dear Mrs. Lamb, it will give me great pleasure to hear that you are likely to come within my nest. My father's state of health must exclude general society, and therefore diminish the inducements for visiting us to those who require variety. But I trust that you will feel gratified in giving us your company in these circumstances, and that my vicinity to London will enable you to do so. Ada's health is much improved. I shall, perhaps, take her again to the sea in winter.—Believe me, with kind regards to Mr. G. Lamb,

Ever yours affectionately,

A. I. NOEL BYRON.

Esher: Feb. 12 [     ].

(24) DEAR MRS. LAMB,—There is no opinion of mine which I should wish to reserve from *you*, but I did not think it fair to speak from the impressions of 30 years ago, which were not favourable to L. H. I have since inquired and learned that, while his agreeable social qualities are liked by many, he is regarded as 'not a man of high principle,'—and this by persons who have not themselves a standard of religious strictness. I am the more cautious in not disclosing past misconduct in those whose characters may have been known to me formerly from *the same source*, because in one case I have had the satisfaction of seeing a complete reform,—and if I had not kept a secret which I was by no means bound to keep, the individual might have been prevented from taking, as he now does, an honourable and useful place in society. My betterness as to health is, I think, only the result of more skilful management, but I am happy to use these intervals of health. How long shall you be at Brighton? Perhaps I may go there for a few days when the weather is fine again.

The religious world is going on fast towards Persecution by the Civil Power. Sewell and Newman contend for it, and many who would formerly have talked of 'Dissenters' now speak of 'Heretics.' One's gray hairs may yet wear the crown of Martyrdom. I am sorry that Ada has left Brighton as she would have liked to meet you.

Yours ever,

A. I. N. B.

Esher: April 21 [     ].

(25) DEAR MRS. LAMB,—I wished as I drove thro' Richmond yesterday that you had returned to your home, but perhaps you are *best*, though I am sorry to find not *well*, at Brighton.

My anxiety about Mr. Robertson induced me to write to Mr. Whitehouse to inquire, but I have not received any answer. I am glad such kind interest has been shown for Mr. R. There are, however, some reasons which make me think it better not to be amongst the Subscribers.

You have, of course, read Moore's Journal. It exhibits the *man* in a less favourable light than he had before appeared in. His ingratitude to Lord Moira, on whose bounties he had so long fed, and his feeling so much about his pecuniary interests when the news of Lord Byron's death arrived, are too much of the same character. His friends were valued by him for what they were *worth*.

As to myself I have no reason to complain. It seems to be thought that a private letter of mine ought not to have been published without my leave,



and especially as the letter to which it was an answer was not presented to the reader. But I am not unwilling that my reasons (my chief one, at least, and which no longer exists) for avoiding the public discussion of my affairs should be made known. I hear that some of my letter is thought cold and hard, and no doubt it was so. After my separation it was necessary for my personal security and the interests of my child that every communication I made to Lord B. should be revised or dictated by my legal advisers, and it was no more *my own* in style than any Deed or Will drawn up by a Lawyer with my concurrence. People are not aware that an Agreement for a Separation is invalidated by any words or proceedings which look like a renewal of former ties.

According to the information I received at the time the Memoirs were burnt I had no doubt that Murray was really the loser, tho' Lord Landsdowne maintained the cause of Moore. The documents now produced, including a letter printed for private circulation by the present Murray, and written to Sir R. Wilmot Horton by old Murray, must, I think, convince any one of that fact.

Many falsehoods concerning Ada's last days and months are circulated. Pray enable me to contradict any you may hear. Some are most wicked.

Ever, dear friend, yours,

A. I. N. B.

Esher: April 26th [    ].

(26) DEAR MRS. LAMB,—I had some conversation with R. a year ago about a Curate. The difficulty stated by him was to find one who would not by taking an opposite course to himself neutralize his efforts or perplex the Congregation. You will say that the Chance-Curates do this; but one may counteract another—'Catch your hare first.' If you can, I tell you under solemn pledge of secrecy that I will help, but on no account must *he* know of it,—and of course not others.

It will be painful to you to learn why I have not sent you the book. Lord L. has communicated to me through his professional friend his positive injunction neither to give away nor to appropriate any of the books which *she* left in my hands for those purposes,—this too after he had, thro' the same channel, consented to my doing so. The *legal* right is his, of course. It seems I am to stand quite alone. Ralph has not, however, yet been withdrawn. It would break the boy's heart; but even for his sake I will not accept nor sanction untruth. It is better that Family disunion should not be known as long as it may be mended, but I owe it to truth to tell *you* the reason.

Yours affectionately,

A. I. N. B.

Brighton: March 14, 1854.

(27) DEAR MRS. LAMB,—Whatever you may wish or think right, Private letters will be published. Those who have a regard for the memory of the Deceased should, in my opinion, use their best judgment in securing such evidence as will place the favourable side of the character in an unequivocal light before the Public, and I think that *passages* from two of these letters may be the only proofs extant of Lord Melbourne's religious feelings and extreme tenderness and generosity, and they reflect great honour on poor Lady C. also, and are calculated to protect her memory from the Pharisees. Dr. Lushington told me the other day, when he came down to see me, that he had known far more mischief done by the destruction than by the preservation of MSS.

If I am not mistaken in my observations on V. F., he will not long be



the subject of comment. There are symptoms, too, like what I have seen in Robertson and another. He was near fainting here the other day. In such a state it is of importance not to disturb him by remonstrances, particularly if the cause of excitement be of a physical character. I am not better, but content not to be worse.

Yours,

A. I. N. B.

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*Memorandum in Mrs. Leigh's handwriting.*

(28) In order to understand the following correspondence, it is necessary to state that Lord Byron's Trustee for the Marriage Settlement (Mr. D. Kinnaird) had (after behaving in a most extraordinary manner about a mortgage which he had himself accepted and ordered to be proceeded with) just resigned his Trust.

Mr. Kinnaird had (since 1824) constantly held out to Mrs. L., the expediency and even the importance of investing the Trust Fund on Mortgage; had engaged in several, and one in particular, previous to the one now in question, which had failed at the moment of completion, at which he expressed himself greatly aggrieved. Lady Byron had always expressed her willingness to agree to any measure of the sort, and even more than that, said she considered Mrs. L. 'entitled to it' by the terms of the Settlement and Lord B.'s will, and was unfairly treated in being so many years deprived of the advantages it would afford her. The present Mortgage in negotiation was one found by Col. D'Aguilar by means of Messrs. Capron & Co., Mr. Kinnaird having urged Mrs. L. to make every inquiry for one among her friends.

On Mr. K.'s resignation Mrs. L. made it her particular request to Lady Byron to see Col. D'A., also went down to Hanger Hill for that purpose, and read to her the whole of his correspondence with Mr. K. and the statement of what had occurred; and Lady B. was also informed that Messrs. Capron had expended between Two and Three Hundred Pounds on the writings and other Preliminaries of the proposed Mortgage, and, besides this, had advanced 3,000*l.* on bills due the 10th, 15th, and 20th of January, 1830, to the Borrower, who conceived himself ill-treated by the vexatious delays, and who had already borrowed 20,000*l.* of the 35,000*l.* elsewhere, to induce him to await the completion of the business and not borrow the remaining 38,000*l.* in some other quarter.

Upon Mr. Kinnaird's resignation, it appeared, on reference to Lady B.'s Marriage Settlement, that had Lord Byron been alive the appointment would have been a joint one; in the event of the death of either party the right of appointment remained with the survivor.

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*Mrs. Leigh to Lady Byron.*

28 Nov., 1829.

(29) MY DEAREST A.,—I do not like to detain your servant, and was unable to answer your letter at the moment I rec<sup>d</sup> it. As regards your nomination of Dr. L. as trustee, I have to observe that he is a perfect stranger to me; that in a matter where my own individual interests are concerned it is of the highest importance to my comfort that I should be on terms of friendly intercourse and even intimacy with the Party; and that as you are already of a Protector [?] to your interests in the person of Dr. Bland, I

had not thought it unreasonable to hope that you wd allow me a similar advantage in the appointment of some individual personally known to me, and in whom I could confide entirely.

Had I been consulted I s<sup>d</sup> naturally have preferred a friend of my own, but as you have not considered that step [proper], I hope I may be permitted to request that in any event Mr. Capron may be named as solicitor to the trust for my Protection, as with him I can communicate on all occasions, and it is the only mark of gratitude I can confer on him for all his kindness to me during this most trying period, as well as the best proof I can afford Col. D'Aguilar of my personal regard and esteem.

Ever yours affectionately,

A. L.

Sunday Morning. P.S.—Under all the circumstances I have stated, I cannot help thinking that Dr. Lushington himself would not wish to accept the Trust, and I hope it is not asking too much to request you to put him in possession of this letter before anything is finally concluded.

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*Lady Byron to Mrs. Leigh.*

Hanger Hill, Nov. 28, 182[9 ?].

(30) DEAREST A.,—I am happy to say that Dr. Lushington is likely to accept the office of Trustee, for which his habits of despatch and decision render him particularly fitted in the present emergency. I have informed him of the stipulation to which I agreed at the suggestion of Col. D'Aguilar, viz., that Messrs. Capron & Co. should complete the business in which they have been engaged, tho' not to the exclusion of any inquiries which might be deemed necessary by the Trustees. On being made acquainted with what had passed, I could perfectly enter into the anxiety and distress which you must have felt. Col. D'Aguilar's conduct appeared to me throughout to be manly, temperate, and courteous,—in short, that of the perfect gentleman. I cannot help wishing that the conduct of the two parties were generally known, but I feel the propriety of the suppression when I consider what might be the consequences of such a disclosure to the one who has already suffered too much.

Ever yours affectionately,

A. I. N. B.

(31) The Trustees have been named, and I don't see how they can be the subject of any request. I am much the same, and must try to be quiet,—but that need not prevent your sending my letter if necessary.

In haste,

A. I. N. B.

Hanger Hill, Nov. 29 [1829].

(32) MY DEAREST A.,—Mr. Wharton, who as well as Dr. Lushington is now with me, will acquaint you with the result of the consultation, and inform you on some points respecting which you appear to have been ignorant.

In haste, yours ever,

A. I. N. B.

As I could not properly make my reply about Messrs. Capron thro' Mr. Wharton, I will observe that I do not think the interest of any parties

likely to be secured by the employment of Messrs. Capron and Co. under the trust.

To Mrs. Leigh,  
St. James's Palace.

(33) Copy of a Paper given me by Mr. Wharton.

Nov. 30, 1829.

Dr. Lushington is of opinion that Lady Noel Byron must nominate a Trustee of her own selection, and that the new Trustee and Mr. Bland, the present Trustee, must be advised in all matters by solicitors known to them, and in whom they place confidence, and certainly not in a matter relating to any Mortgage by the Solicitor for the Mortgage.

With respect to the proposed Mortgage, Dr. L. thinks that the validity of the Security and the sufficiency of the estate must be certified to the Trustees by the Solicitors and a conveyancer of their own selection, and that to require them to place their confidence in Messrs. Capron & Co., the solicitors for the Mortgager, is wholly inadmissible. With regard to the preparation of the Deeds merely, it is a question only which Solicitor sa have certain emolument. But Dr. Lushington is of opinion that an increased expense w<sup>d</sup> be occasioned by the course suggested, viz., that one Solicitor s<sup>d</sup> prepare and another examine.

This extra expense the Trustees would not be justified in paying out of the Trust Estate.

There is another consideration. The security may be good and sufficient, but the Interest not regularly paid, the Mortgager being [in] distress. In this event litigations and difficulty w<sup>d</sup> ensue, and Mrs. Leigh w<sup>d</sup> be the ultimate sufferer.

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*Mrs. Leigh to Lady Byron.*

(Copy by Mrs. L.)

Dec. 10, 1829 (Ada's Birthday).

(34) Pray be so kind as to give me some account of Ada's health and of your own, and accept my wishes for many happy (and more happy) returns of this day to you both.

Yours ever affectionately,

AUG. LEIGH.

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*Lady Byron to Mrs. Leigh.*

(Copy by Mrs. L.)

H. Hill : Dec. 11, 1829.

(35) I thank you for your kind wishes to Ada and me. She is rather better. Am I to conclude from your silence that reflection on recent circumstances has not yet convinced you of the consideration which has been shown to your interests? Or am I rather to suppose that your mind is preoccupied by 'the distracting state of affairs' to which you alluded? In the latter case can my advice or sympathy afford you any comfort? for I am always,

Your faithful friend,

A. I. N. B.



*Mrs. Leigh to Lady Byron.*

(Copy by Mrs. Leigh.)

January 12th, 1830.

(36) It is now a month since I have heard from you. I am anxious to know that your silence has not been caused by illness and to receive some account of Ada, whose improvement I hope continues.

Ever-yours affectionately,

A. L.

*Lady Byron to Mrs. Leigh.*

Hanger Hill, Jan. 13th, 1830.

(37) My silence is to be accounted for by your last letter in connection with the previous circumstances. You have left me but one course,—a painful one,—to adopt in order to avoid future occasions of such injurious misconstruction.

To 'be kind still to Augusta' has been my constant endeavour, and you have not had the shadow of a reason for imputing any other motives to my conduct.

Ada is in a favourable state. Accounts of her health will be sent you when desired.

Ever faithfully yours,

A. I. NOEL BYRON.

*Mrs. Leigh to Lady Byron.*

Jan. 15, 1830.

(38) I am extremely sorry to inflict further trouble on you, but your letter is really so unaccountable that I must request you to explain it.

Will you have the goodness to tell me *what* you have to object to in my 'last letter in connection with the previous circumstances'? When I reflect on those circumstances I am really astonished at the term 'injurious misconstructions' as applied to any feeling, or expression of my feelings, connected with them. You had the appointment of a new Trustee. You stated that Dr. Lushington was likely to accept the office. I represented to you, I hope, most respectfully and properly (for I wish to do so), that the appointment, for very natural and good reasons, was not agreeable to me, and in the event of your being unmindful of such feeling on my part, I ventured to ask you at least to allow me the comfort of Mr. Capron & Co. as the channel of communication with those who were entire strangers to me. It appeared, and does appear to me, not unreasonable that I should look for some consideration of my wishes and comfort, situated as I am, and much as I have suffered; *but all was denied me!* and the result of the consultation was communicated not in an answer from yourself, explaining your motives and regretting the necessity, but by a verbal message, with a legal paper in his hand, by your solicitor,—at a moment, too, when I was literally agonized and worn out by every sort of misery and apprehension.

You may say that I received the communication with indignation. I certainly did! and how can that be wondered at?—or that I said the whole business appeared preconcerted between Mr. K. and Dr. L.? I did say all this, and some [ ] perhaps, for anything I know, in the state of misery I was in. But whatever I may have felt, I uttered no word of unkindness against you, although you have wounded me to the quick by

this proceeding. I am not aware that I have ever been deficient either in feeling or acknowledgement of all the kindness I have received from you. If you think I have, I beg you will tell me so, as it is not fair to afford me no opportunity of justifying myself when I am unconscious of having erred.

I have used no mystery with *you*. What I have said, I have said openly and fairly. I repeat that I regret having to recur to this most painful subject; but you have driven me to it by accusing me of 'injurious mis-constructions.' I have stated facts as they occurred, and feelings which were the natural and inevitable consequences of them; but which I assured you, and now again assure you, were not incompatible with the grateful sense I entertained of your former kindness.

It is needless, I hope, to repeat that I rejoice to hear of Ada's state being favourable, and that I am, and always shall be, *most* anxious to hear of her and of you.

Ever affectionately yours,

A. L.

*Lady Byron to Mrs. Leigh.*

(Copy by Mrs. Leigh.)

Jan. 17, 1830.

(39) From your representations and the conclusions you draw, it is evident to me that your mind is not in a state to admit the truth. I must therefore decline any further discussion of facts which are already as well known to you as to me.

Believe me ever faithfully yours,

A. I. N. B.

*Mrs. Leigh to Lady Byron.*

St. J. P. 19 Jan., 1830.

(40) As it is my earnest wish to write to you in a tone of calmness and conciliation, I will not be prevented from doing so by the letter I have received from you, and which conveys not only a pang to my feelings but an impeachment of my sincerity.

You say from my representations and the conclusions I draw it is evident my mind is not in a state 'to admit the truth.' I answer, if my representations are incorrect (which I declare most solemnly I am not aware of), point out where I am mistaken and I shall be happy to rectify them. If my conclusions are unfounded, show me where I am wrong and I shall be delighted to withdraw them. Surely this does not savour of a mind unwilling to admit the truth or undesirous to obtain it, when all I ask is to know it, and to be governed by it entirely. When you tell me that 'you decline any further discussion of facts which are already as well known to me as yourself,' you *more* than convey an insinuation that I have wilfully misrepresented motives. I *deny* having done so, and I repeat that I have spoken to you openly and fairly without one word of intentional subterfuge or evasion.

My Heart is broken in every way! But with my last breath I shall acquit myself of all intentional injustice to you or want of acknowledgement of your kindness for me.

Yours ever affectionately,

A. L.

Feb. 19th, 1830.

(41) I have hoped in vain for a whole month to receive some answer to my last letter. I can no longer refrain from asking you after Ada, being always very anxious to hear of her, and particularly so now, to know that the late very severe weather has not occasioned cough, and that she is going on in her recovery as well as you could hope to expect.

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*Lady Byron to Mrs. Leigh.*

Feb. 22, 1830.

(42) I am happy to tell you that Ada is not at all the worse for the severe weather. She has lost the tendency to spasms, and I have just had a favourable opinion from Dr. Southey of the state of her constitution.

I have been unwilling to occasion pain or irritation by prolonging a discussion which, as I have already said, does not appear to me at all likely to produce agreement of opinion. But being so pressed for a more explicit avowal of my sentiments, I will now give them.

I am unable to reconcile the candid expressions in your last letter with the positive declaration in your former one. On December 12th you wrote, 'I will not be so unjust to myself as to affect an acknowledgement with reference to late events which I cannot feel. *On that subject I never can have but one opinion*, and no future advantage I may ever derive from the nomination can compensate to me for the appointment itself, the manner of communicating it, or the misery, harassment, and vexation which all the measures connected with it have occasioned.' This 'honest expression of your wounded feelings' (as you termed it) was in answer to a letter of mine, in which, with the best intentions, I even suggested an excuse for your conduct, and offered you my advice and sympathy. In a subsequent letter you specify more particularly these imaginary offences against you.

With such contradictory evidence before me I can only be convinced that you are sincerely desirous of 'rectifying your mistakes' by your giving an unqualified assent to the truth of the following assertions:—

1st. That you had no sort of right or claim to interfere in the nomination of a Trustee, nor of Solicitors, under my Marriage Settlement;

2nd. That you had no reason whatsoever to doubt that I should promote the interests of yourself and your family by every means in my power, nor to mistrust my consideration for your feelings as well as your circumstances; That my mode of proceeding at the time of the nomination could not be regarded as offensive to you in any respect, nor as calculated to excite your indignation;

3rd. That you had no reason whatsoever to suspect Dr. L. of having acted the dishonourable part which you imputed to him,—viz., that of preconcerting with Mr. D. Kinnaird a plan for obtaining the trusteeship;—also, that Dr. L. had not given you any excuse to apprehend that his conduct as Trustee would be prejudicial to your interests or unfriendly to you personally;

4th. As for the complaint of my having made a communication of a *legal* nature thro' my solicitor (preceded, however, by a letter from myself), you will recollect that there was no other resource after objections which you had expressed to any transactions with Dr. L. himself,—and that you were previously on good terms with that solicitor Mr. Wharton. Such an accusation is really too absurd.

If after full consideration you can't admit that my assertions are perfectly well-founded, I must beg you to signify your dissent by silence on the subject.

Ever yours faithfully,

A. I. N. B.



*Mrs. Leigh to Lady Byron.*

Feb. 24th, 1830.

(43) I dissent essentially from the contents of your letter, but I will not do so 'in silence,' lest that silence should be misinterpreted. My answer will be included in a few words.

1st. In reply to your 'assertions,' I never pretended to any legal right to nominate a Trustee under your Marriage Settlement, but the absence of this right gave me only (in my opinion) an additional claim in courtesy to be considered in the nomination. I never attempted to confine your nomination to any one you did not approve. All I requested was that you would not fix upon a person who was a total stranger to me, but if you did, that you would enable me to communicate with such person directly through my own solicitors, by appointing these to act under the Trust; for proof of this I refer you to my letter of the 28th Nov.

2nd. I never doubted your disposition to promote the interests of 'myself and my family by any just means,'—and even [when] most hurt by the nomination, I never expressed such an idea.

3rd. I did regard the Nomination in question and the mode of communicating it (through your solicitor) as extremely unkind of you after my letter of the 28th Nov., and calculated to give me extreme pain, however upright your motives might have appeared to yourself.

4th. To that assertion I can only reply by referring you to my letter of the 15th January. I did say, in a moment of irritation, that the whole thing appeared to me preconcerted, but I do willingly and entirely acquit Dr. L. of all such intention as you would make me ascribe to him, altho' I am still unable to account for his accepting the Trust, if you put him in possession, as I requested you, of my letter.

When I say this, I beg it may be understood that I do it with a perfect sense of the acknowledgement due to his exertions in my favour since he undertook the Trusteeship.

With respect to my long letter of the 12th November, I am at a loss to see how it differs from or contradicts any part of my subsequent correspondence, still less how the words 'imaginary offences' apply to the latter. Either you made the nomination in direct opposition to my earnest and respectful entreaty, and without even the form of explanation or regret for its necessity, or you did *not*—if the former, it is the *fact* I complained of, not an 'imaginary offence' (to use your own words); if the latter, then indeed I am under a complete delusion to this hour.

It is this fact I referred to when I said 'I never could have but one opinion on the subject,' by which I meant the unkindness of such a nomination, &c., &c., under the circumstances stated.

It was this and this total apparent absence of all consideration for my feelings at that moment that I complained of. I was dreadfully hurt, and I expressed myself so without reserve, but I did not on that account refuse myself the hope of being reconciled, still less did I attempt to put any limits to explanation or correspondence. This has been your doing, but I trust you will not persevere in such a resolution. I can forgive and do forgive freely all and everything that has agonized, and I may say almost destroyed me. I can believe that you have been actuated throughout by a principle which you thought a right one, but my own self-respect will never allow me to acknowledge an obligation where none has been originally conferred, or to turn my own self-accuser by admitting imputations which my heart has uniformly disclaimed.

I am most sincerely glad to receive so good an account of Ada's health:

she will ever possess my most affectionate wishes and anxiety for her welfare, however little valuable and insignificant they may appear.

Yours ever truly,

A. L.

St. James's Palace, March 1st, 1830.

(44) I take the earliest opportunity allowed to me to offer you my very grateful thanks for the loan of 300*l.* which you kindly made to the Trevanions last March. I say the earliest, because although informed of the circumstance in a letter from Mr. Wilmot Horton of the 15 February, I have only to-day, for reasons of which you are aware, rec<sup>d</sup> permission from Calais to acknowledge it. I trust, therefore, that you will acquit me of ingratitude on this occasion, and believe me, for this kindness,

Your sincerely obliged,

AUGUSTA LEIGH.

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*Lady Byron to Mrs. Leigh.*

Brighton: Feb. 11, 1851.

*Private.*

(45) Since the cessation of our personal intercourse you have more than once asked me to see you. If you still feel that wish I will comply with it. We may not long have it in our power, Augusta, to meet again in this life, and to do so might be the means of leaving to both of us a remembrance of deep though sad thankfulness. But this could not be the effect unless every worldly interest were absolutely excluded from our conversation, and there were the most entire and mutual truthfulness. *No other expectations* must be entertained by you for a moment. On any other terms I cannot see you again, unless summoned to your death-bed.

If you decline, these will be the last words of mine ever addressed to you, and as such I wish they could convey to your heart the feelings with which I write them, and am

Yours,

A. I. NOEL BYRON.

Brighton: Feb. 18, 1851.

(46) I shall hope to hear soon of your recovery, but in the mean time it may be well to say that I cannot venture into London at this season; and as I should be anxious to save you fatigue, I propose to meet you at the nearest convenient Hotel on this railway.

I would hear *in Private* whatever you might have to say to me, but should I after hearing it wish to make any observations, you must permit me to do so in the presence of a friend who will accompany me—one who has not been in any way connected with past transactions. The Interview cannot but be one of suffering to me, though as my health is now equal to the effort, I think it right to make it.

Yours,

The Hon. Mrs. Leigh.

A. I. NOEL BYRON.

Brighton: March 30th, 1851.

(47) Your letter of consent would not have been left unanswered a single post, but I received it only yesterday Evening, after an absence of two days from Brighton.

In case you should have any personal objection to the Gentleman who would, I hope, accompany me, I will name the Rev. Frederick Robertson, of Trinity Chapel here. I must consult his convenience as to time, but it would probably be Thursday or Friday. I shall conclude from your silence

that you acquiesce in this arrangement, and let you know as soon as I have communicated with him.

Yours,

A. I. NOEL BYRON.

April 3rd, 1851.

(48) I have released myself from some engagements, and can offer to meet you at Reigate on Tuesday next, under the arrangement before proposed. I wish I could lessen your share of the fatigue, but I must only hope, and do so most earnestly, that your object and mine in meeting may be fulfilled as far as God sees to be good for both.

A. I. NOEL BYRON.

Saturday.

(49) The enclosed will show that by leaving the Brighton Terminus (do not mistake the S. Eastern for it, both being at the London Bridge) and taking a ticket for Reigate, you will arrive there at 12.45. My servant in Drab Livery holding up my card will look into all the 1st Class Carriages, and will have a Fly waiting to convey you to Reigate Town (a mile and a half from the Station), where I shall be at the White Hart.

Brighton, April 12th, 1851.

(50) Your letter of the 10th affords the last proof that during our Interview, trying and painful as it was to me, I did not for a moment forget the consideration I was bound to observe by your having trusted me *unconditionally*.

As I have received the communication which you have so long and anxiously desired to make—and upon which I offered no comment except ‘Is that All?’—I have done all in my power to contribute to your peace of mind. But I remain under the afflicting persuasion that it is not attained by such means as you have taken. Farewell.

A. I. NOEL BYRON.

*Mrs. Leigh to Lady Byron.*

St. J. Palace, Ap. 26, 1851.

(51) I feel sure that you would not willingly be unjust, and therefore, after much perplexing and deep consideration, I have determined again to address you. My great wish for an interview with you arose partly from a secret desire to see you once more in this world, and still more to have the means of convincing you that accusations which I had reason to believe had been brought against me to you were unfounded, and at this, if only from the recollection of the affection that once subsisted between us, you cannot be surprised. I had not, and never implied that I had, anything to reveal to you with which you were not previously acquainted on any other subject. Nor can I at all express to you the regret I have felt ever since those words escaped you, showing that you imagined I had ‘encouraged a bitterness of feeling in Lord Byron towards you.’ I can as solemnly declare to you as if I were on my oath or on my death-bed that I never did so in any one instance, but that I invariably did the contrary. I have letters from him, and of my own to him (and returned to me after his death), which would bear out this assertion, and I am ready at this or any other moment to make the most solemn asseveration of this, in any way that you can devise. I would willingly see your friend Mr. Robertson and afford him every proof of my veracity in my power.



It was clear that he thought that I was keeping back communications that ought to be made to you, and as your confidential friend it would be a comfort to me to talk openly with him on such points as might tend to convince you of the truth of what I now say—and without which the remainder of my life will be still more unhappy than the miseries, of various kinds, which surround me must inevitably make me.

I remain, &c.,

AUGUSTA LEIGH.

In addition to the foregoing documents there were published in 'The Athenæum' the following Letter (dated 29th October, 1824) from John Cam Hobhouse to the Hon. Mrs. Leigh, in which he calls 'the Memoirs' *foolish documents*, and speaks of Byron's *morbid selfishness*; and the following Memorandum (in Mrs. Leigh's handwriting) showing that John Cam Hobhouse (Lord Broughton) was the actual destroyer of 'the Memoirs':—the Letter being published in 'The Athenæum' of 4th August, 1883, and the Memorandum on 18th August, 1883.

Kirby Park, Melton Mowbray, [     ]

(52) DEAR MRS. LEIGH.—I send you a line just to let you know that your letter has been received. For I have nothing to tell you. With respect to the "fusses" you anticipate, always recollect they cannot be inflicted upon us except by our own consent. For my own part, I will endure none, and I advise you to follow so sage an example. Do not bestow a thought upon the contemptible gossip published in the name of your brother. The world which has an interest in discovering that men of talents have many weak points will encourage and keep alive the shameful records of frailty. But it will be only for a time, and the final judgment of mankind will condemn and consign to oblivion such base and treacherous exposures of private intercourse. So never mind Mr. Medwin. He has told three falsehoods respecting myself. But let them pass.

I perfectly agree with what you say of Colonel Stanhope's publication. He is not a bad man, but he is a weak man, and one who follows the new school of Utilitarians, that is—all for being of use, at any risk or expense of the comfort and happiness of individuals. These good folks not only never tell lies, but never omit an opportunity of speaking the truth—and being, moreover, a little vain, they generally prefer those disclosures which include the mention of themselves. Hence the details of the honest Colonel's conversation and controversy with your brother. If I had not expected that all which has happened would happen, I should have been grievously annoyed. As it is, I bless heaven it is no worse. It does, however, rather vex me that so excellent and honourable and so right-minded a person as Lady Jersey should have had the story of the 'Memoirs' so distorted and so misrepresented to her by some one or other *as to entertain the slightest doubt as to the inevitable necessity of destroying those foolish documents*. If I should ever have an opportunity of speaking five words to her on the subject, she should no longer be sceptical on the point at issue. I am sure I am not at all concerned at her or any one else being what you call a "Mooreite." If ballad-writers had not their admirers, Heaven preserve us! what would become of us and our national music? The world is wide enough for Tom Moore to range in, and still to leave a corner or two for unobtrusive folks like ourselves to niche themselves. I am, however, rather apprehensive that the 'London Magazine,' and Captain Medwin, and Colonel Stanhope, and Dr. Kennedy, and Mr. Bowring, and

Mr. Blaquiere, and the 'Monthly Mirror,' and *tutti quanti*, will rather forestall the great biography which they say is getting up at Longman's.

Poor Byron! He is now paying the penalty of his principal fault—a love of talking of himself to any sycophant that would listen to him. That was his real failing, and though it looked like an amiable weakness, it was a most pernicious propensity, inasmuch as it *encouraged and fostered that morbid selfishness which was the great stain on his character*, and has contributed more than any other error to the injury of his fame. Farewell.

Yours very truly,

J. C. HOEHOUSE.

(53) The Hon. Mrs. Leigh's Memorandum, touching the destruction of 'the Memoirs,' showing that they were destroyed by John Cam Hobhouse (afterwards Lord Broughton).

'LORD BYRON'S MEMOIRS.

'On the 14th of May, 1824, I received the intelligence that my Brother had breathed his last at Missolonghi on Tuesday, the 19th of April of 1824. On that day I had an interview with Mr. Hobhouse, who, in the course of our melancholy conversation, adverted to the "Memoirs" in a tone of some anxiety, and informed me they were in the possession of Mr. Moore, and further remarked that he would see Mr. M. respecting them. On Saturday, the 15th of May, Mr. H. called again upon me, and announced that he had seen Mr. Moore, who had expressed his determination of placing the "Memoirs" at my disposal, and added that his, Mr. H.'s, own advice was that he recommended me to put them on the fire, as a duty which I owed to the Fame and Memory of my Brother. I started at the recommendation, and expressed to Mr. H. that I felt it a very delicate interference on my part, and one which, for many reasons, and more particularly for the weight of responsibility I might incur, I shrank from. Mr. H. replied that it was absolutely necessary I should accept Mr. M.'s offer and destroy the MSS. [*sic*], as he would not resign it [*sic*] to any other person, and repeated how much my Brother's fame would be involved in the Publication, and asserted, what was very conclusive with me, that my Brother *had latterly expressed to Mr. H. a wish that it should not be published*. Under all these circumstances I consented to receive and destroy it, on the following Monday, in the presence of those whom Mr. H. named as proper witnesses of the destruction. On his leaving me I expressed to the present Lord Byron (whom I immediately found in the next room) my dread and unwillingness to be the agent in the business. His reply was, "Oh, never mind! You ought to be only too happy to have the power of destroying them." Thus encouraged, I prepared my mind for the performance of what I considered a painful and embarrassing duty to the Memory of my Brother. But it must be observed that he had never to me on any one occasion alluded to the existence even of the "Memoirs"! that I never *had read or heard* one single line or word of them. Nor did I know more than that some Memoirs did exist, that there had been some pecuniary transactions respecting them between Messrs. Moore and Murray, and that I had once or twice heard in a roundabout manner of some passage or subject said to be alluded to or mentioned in them.

'On Sunday, the 16th May (the day after my last interview with Mr. Hobhouse), Mr. Wilmot Horton called upon me, stating he came to me from Mr. Murray respecting the "Memoirs," and stating also that they were the property of Mr. Murray, who, as well as Mr. Moore, protested against their destruction, though most willing to resign them to me. I could not but feel and express the greatest surprise at this after what



had already passed between me and Mr. Hobhouse, which I related to Mr. W. H., and said that seeing clearly there was some mistake or misunderstanding between Mr. Moore and Mr. Murray as to the property, I must decline—and indeed I had much rather decline—having to do with the business. Mr. W. H. replied that I *must* have to do with it, for neither would resign the MSS. to anybody but me! but he (Mr. W. H.) did also protest against the destruction of it, and proposed that it should be sealed up and deposited at his Bankers', and that in due time a selection should be made of the unexceptionable portion of it for publication, and the rest should be destroyed or omitted. I certainly dissented to the whole of this proposal, and remarked upon the difficulty of making such selections, and declared that if I had any concern at all (which I by no means desired to have in the business) that [*sic*] the MSS. should be, according to the advice of Mr. Hobhouse, destroyed, that I considered Mr. H. my brother's most intimate and confidential friend, and that his having expressed to Mr. H. a desire that the MSS. should not be published was in my mind conclusive.

'Mr. W. H., therefore, left me with the understanding that the destruction should take place on the Monday morning, but protested against the MSS. should [*sic*] be even brought into my House!!! which was an infinite relief to my mind. Of what occurred after this, I only heard that the MSS. was destroyed on Monday, the 17th May, at Mr. Murray's, in the presence of Mr. Hobhouse, Mr. Wilmot Horton, Colonel Doyle, Mr. Luttrell, Mr. Moore, and Mr. Murray; that much disputation and confusion had taken place during the transaction respecting the property of the "Memoirs," whether it was with Mr. Moore or Mr. Murray, each of those gentlemen claiming it, and Mr. Murray's clerk having mislaid the Legal Document, which was not found till after the destruction; and that Mr. Murray had been obliged by the Parties present to receive back from Mr. Moore £2,000, the sum which had originally passed between them as the purchase-money, Mr. Murray protesting against so doing on the plea that the MSS. *was, bonâ fide*, his property, which was presently found to be correct by the production of the Legal Agreement.'

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### PART III.

(54) *Letter from Jane Clermont (Claire) to Lord Byron, dated from Florence, March, 1821.*

I have just received the letter which announces the putting Allegra into a convent. Before I quitted Geneva you promised me verbally it is true that my child whatever its sex should never be away from one of its parents. This promise originated in my being afflicted at your idea of placing it under the protection of Mrs. Leigh. This promise is violated, not only slightly but in a mode and by a conduct most intolerable to my feeling of love for Allegra. It has been my desire and my practice to interfere with you as little as possible but were I silent now you would adopt this as an argument against me at some future period. I therefore represent to you that the putting Allegra at her years into a convent away from any relation is to me a serious and deep affliction. Since you first gave the hint of your design, I have been at some pains to enquire into their



system and I find that the state of the children is nothing less than most miserable. I see no reason to believe that convents are better regulated at Ravenna, a secondary out-of-the way town of the Roman States than at Florence the capital of Tuscany. Every traveller and writer upon Italy joins in condemning them, which would be alone sufficient testimony without adverting to the state of ignorance and profligacy of the Italian women, all pupils of convents. They are bad wives and most unnatural mothers, licentious and ignorant they are the dishonour and unhappiness of society. This then, with every advantage in your power, of wealth, of friends, is the education you have chosen for your daughter; this step will procure to you an innumerable addition of enemies and of blame, for it can be regarded but in one light by the virtuous of whatever sect or denomination. Allegra's misfortune in being condemned by her father to a life of ignorance and degradation, in being deprived of the advantages, which she belonging to the most enlightened country in the world entitle her to, and of the protection and friendship of her parents' friends (so essential to the wellbeing of a child in her desolate situation) by the adoption of a different religion and of an education known to be contemptible will be received by the world as a perfect fulfillment on your part of all the censures passed upon you. How will Lady Byron never yet justified for her conduct towards you be soothed and rejoice in the honourable safety of herself and child, and all the world be bolder to praise her prudence, my unhappy Allegra furnishing the condemning evidence! I alone, misled by love to believe you good, trusted to you, and now I reap the fruits.

I do not describe my feelings of sorrow that this is to be Allegra's destiny because I know what an excitement it would be to you, to continue and if possible to augment the burthen. But I entreat you to retract this step, if not for her sake, at least for your own. Be assured that no reasons can be found to justify this measure. If you doubt that passion may hinder my judging rightly about it, take the opinion of Mrs. Hoppner, a lady every way worthy your attention. Her great knowledge of the world will ensure you the most safe and laudable conduct to be pursued with regard to Allegra's education and I feel so much confidence in her goodness and sound judgment that I should submit to her decision with the greatest pleasure.

I resigned Allegra to you that she might be benefitted by advantages which I could not give her. It was natural for me to expect that your daughter would become an object of affection and would receive an education becoming the child of an english nobleman. Since however you are indifferent to her, or that the purity of your principles does not allow you to cherish a natural child, I entreat you as an act of justice to allow the following scheme to be put into execution, that Allegra may have the benefits her mother can procure to her. I propose to place her at my own expence in one of the very best english boarding schools where if she is deprived of the happiness of a home and paternal cares, she at least would receive an english education which would enable her after many years of painful and unprotected childhood, to be benefitted by the kindness and affection of her parents' friends. This school shall be chosen by your own friends, I will see her only so often as they shall decide, because I hope to induce you by this sacrifice of myself to yield the child to proper hands. By adopting this plan, you will save your credit and also the expence and anxiety for her safety and wellbeing need never trouble you; you will become as free as if you had no such tie. I entreat you earnestly not to be obdurate on this point; believe me in putting Allegra into a convent to ease yourself of the trouble and to hurt me in my affection for her, you have done almost a greater injury to yourself, than to me or her. So blind is hatred. I have already mentioned the evil to your reputation, besides

which in separating her from you at this early age her attachment is weakened, and the difference of religion added to the evil stories concerning you will in a few years more completely alienate her from you. Such is the miserable and unsatisfactory state produced by this step to all three. To none does it procure one atom of advantage or pleasure. I add another remark upon this convent scheme—if it is a place suited to Allegra why need you pay a double pension to ensure her proper treatment and attention. This little fact, coming from yourself, says everything in condemnation of the plan.

I know not how to address you in terms fit to awaken acquiescence to the above requests; yet neither do I know why you should doubt the wisdom and propriety of what I propose, seeing that I have never with regard to Allegra sought anything but her advantage, even at the price of total unhappiness to myself. 'My heart,' to use the words of an author, 'is rather wise because it loves much, than because it knows much' and the great affection I feel for her makes me to arrive at the knowledge of what is her good, almost as it were instinctively. I pray you to allow yourself to be advised on this point, and I mention Mad: Hoppner because she is friendly disposed towards you and enabled by her situation to judge fairly what difference exists between an Italian and english education.

You would have had the letter much sooner, but that I was absent at Florence when the letter from Ravenna arrived at Pisa; they, not willing to annoy me when on a visit, kept it some time, but as my stay became longer sent it to me. I beg you will address to Pisa as usual, to which city I return in another week. I cannot say how anxiously I expect your answer; since I read the letter I have not had a moment's content, fearing to allow myself ease, lest Allegra should be suffering from neglect. Nor can I be happy until some plan is decided upon of a real advantage to her. I am desirous also of knowing how far Bagna Cavallo is from Ravenna and if on the sea-coast; also whether Allegra is entered only for a short time, or for a fixed period. The answer to these questions is of the greatest importance to me. Again I entreat you to yield, so that we may both be easy about her; I not suffering from anxiety and injury, nor you from the contention in your breast of hatred and pride, which my entreaties awaken. I know that expressions of affection and friendship only exasperate you, yet I cannot help wishing you as much happiness as you inflict unjust misery upon me. Then indeed you would be blessed.

CLAIRE.

Florence: March 24, 1821.

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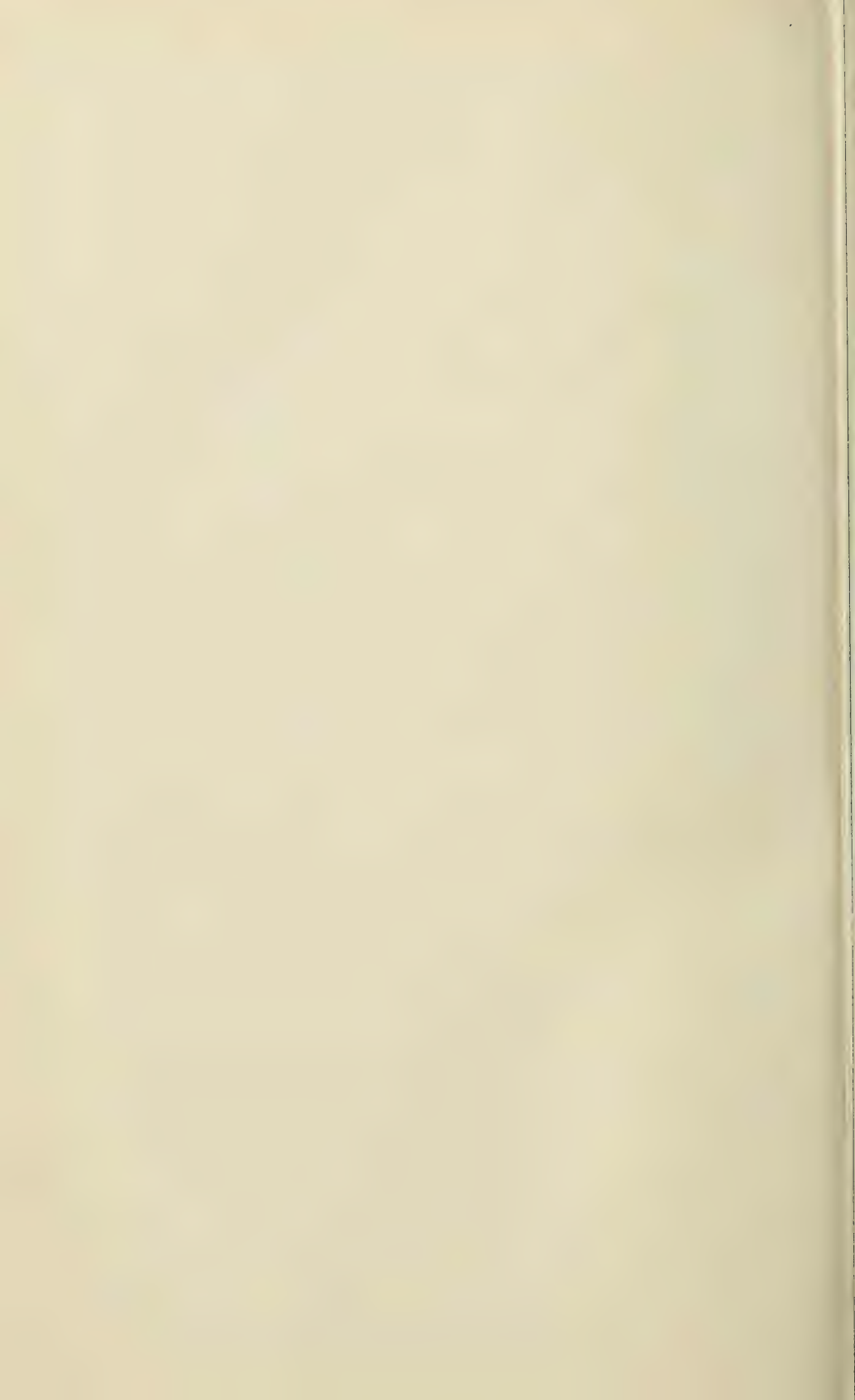
(55) *Note from Lord Byron to Mr. Hoppner, at the foot of the above-given letter from Claire.*

Dr. Hoppner,—The moral part of this letter upon the Italians &c. comes with an excellent grace from the writer now living with a *man* and his *wife*, and having planted a child in the Fl Foundling &c. With regard to the rest of the letter you know as well as any one how far it is or is not correct.

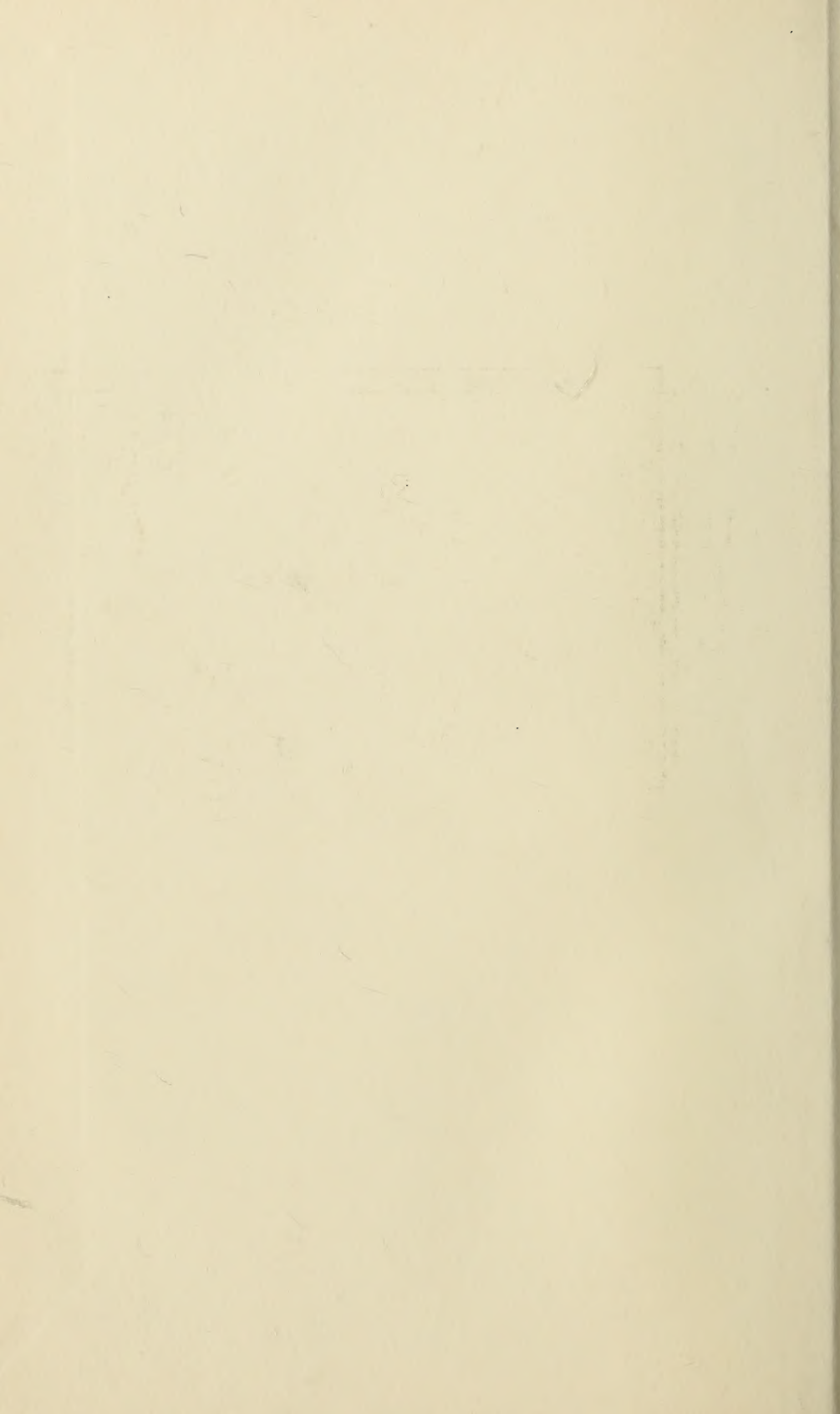
THE END.













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Jeaffreson, John Cordy  
The real Lord Byron  
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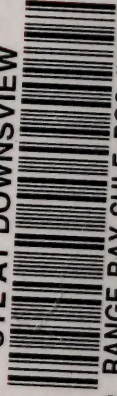
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